

LEARNING IN MOTION: A Sampling of Library Teen Programs

Communities need safe and appealing places for teens to gather. What are the alternatives to the local mall or street corner? In a growing number of communities, public libraries have come to the rescue. Today's libraries offer teens everything from welcoming spaces to hang out, to programs and resources to build critical 21st century skills.

Key Fact:

Participation in library programs for kids under 18 has been rising steadily over the past decade, from 35.5 million/year in 1993, to 51.8 million/year in 2001.

From *Public Libraries in the United States*, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003

Public Opinion:

Three-quarters of Americans believe it is a high priority for local public libraries to offer a safe place where teenagers can study and congregate.

From *Long Overdue: A Fresh Look at Public and Leadership Attitudes About Libraries in the 21st Century*, Public Agenda, June 2006

A Safe Place

Phoenix AZ "Teen Central"

PROBLEM:	Downtown Phoenix lacks central, safe public places for teens to gather.
SOLUTION:	Phoenix Public Library gave teens an entire floor of the new "Burton Barr" main library.
WHAT MAKES IT COOL:	Teens helped design the Living Room, Café, and Art Gallery; they use library computers to write, design, and produce the teen 'zine "Create!"
SIGNS OF SUCCESS:	400 teens use the space each day.
PROGRAM WEBSITE:	http://phoenixteencentral.org

Earning Money, Building Skills

Providence RI "Teen POWER"

PROBLEM:	Providence Public Library branches need help managing busy computer labs; at the same time, in a city in which 54% of residents are newcomers, many children do not have parents who can help them learn to read English.
SOLUTION:	Teen POWER employs teens to manage computer labs in branches and to act as "book buddies" to school-aged children.
WHAT MAKES IT COOL:	Earning money, receiving free computer training, and practicing teaching skills.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS:	Recipient of 2001 National Award for Museum and Library Service.
PROGRAM WEBSITE:	http://www.provlib.org/happening/kidsandteens/teenpower/default.html

Get Real, Get Fit!

Portneuf District Library, Chubbuck, ID

PROBLEM:	Reflecting a national trend, 63% of youth on the Fort Hall Reservation, which the library serves, are obese or risk obesity.
SOLUTION:	<i>Get Real, Get Fit!</i> , a program operated by Americans for Libraries Council, brings teens into the library for discussions about healthy lifestyles and connections to yoga, swim, and Japanese taiko drumming.
WHAT MAKES IT COOL:	Japanese taiko drumming, which combines wellness with music.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS:	One of 10 finalists for the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) 2006 Health Information Awards for Libraries.
PROGRAM WEBSITE:	http://www.lili.org/portneuf/yaevents.html