

www.literacymerritt.ca

Literacy Merritt
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July 2010

District Literacy Plan Update

Summary

Literacy Merritt is in its second year of operation. A Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Robyn Grebliunas, was contracted in 2009 for a three year term. A Literacy Merritt Task Force representing sectors of the community continues to operate as the governance for Literacy Merritt.

Implementation

Coordination and plan implementation is carried out by the LOC and the Literacy Merritt Task Force. The task force represents the following sectors of the community: literacy, library, school district k-12, social development, early years, First Nations, crime prevention, health, adult education and business. There have been some changes to the task force in the past year with people being transferred to new communities. We continue to focus on keeping a balance of representation at task force meetings.

Community Partnerships

Literacy Merritt has been very successful at building community partnerships. Community partners have included: school district, community policing, interior health, Merritt Public Library, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Merritt Youth and Family Resources Society, local media and private business.

Community Awareness

Literacy Merritt works in partnership with local media to create community awareness about literacy services and literacy challenges. Merritt News, Merritt Herald, Merritt Morning Market, Q101 radio, and Shaw TV have been very supportive media partners. Articles and stories have been published in local media, along with information about courses and events. Stories have been covered on Shaw TV. Events have been coordinated to help create community awareness. Direct contact has been made with community representatives. Presentations have been made to Merritt City Council, School District 58 Board of Directors, and the Rotary Club of Merritt.

Programming and Services

In 2009 the Literacy Merritt Task Force chose to focus on the largest gap in literacy services, which is adult literacy. The following action was taken:

English as a Second Language for Adults

In the summer of 2009 we developed English as a Second Language for adults program. In September 2009 two instructors were hired to deliver the course. Both instructors are working on a master's degree in ESL. The course ran with 12 adult students who attended a nine week program. Students received two one hour classes a week and a one hour ESL Coffee Circle where they could practice their skills. The Coffee Circle was run by a community volunteer. The course was offered for free in partnership with Merritt Public Library. Based on the success of the program, Literacy Merritt committed to three program deliveries in 2010. The original students continue to attend the classes and we are focusing on recruiting new students to the program for Fall 2010. The ESL Coffee Circle was cancelled earlier this year due to lack of interest from the students, who would prefer more classroom time. An ESL Think Tank will be taking place this summer to evaluate and expand the services to the students, with a focus being put on introducing the students to the community while learning.

Computer Literacy for Seniors

In 2009 we developed a Computer Literacy for Senior's course. The course was offered three times in 2009 and we are delivering the course five times in 2010. Literacy Merritt cannot keep up with the demand for this course. We have long waiting lists. We have applied for funding to assist with expansion of the program. Merritt Public Library is a partner in the program. We have had some discussion with the school district about possibly expanding the course in partnership with the school district.

We attempted to work with the local college on supporting their adult literacy services. This program was cancelled in 2010.

Early Years:

An energetic volunteer committee of the community members launched the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program in Merritt in 2008. In 2009 the funding and the energy of the volunteers ran out. Literacy Merritt adopted this program, provided some funding, set up a volunteer committee and helped them plan and implement three fundraisers for 2010. The LOC also successfully worked on community funding for the program. In 2010 over \$6,500.00 has been raised to directly support Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Funds were raised through a Reach a Reader campaign, a Literacy Pizza Party and community and business sponsorships. The 50 children who were on the waiting list since 2009 have now all been registered on the program and will begin receiving their books by September 2010. A Dolly Parton Imagination Library quilt raffle and steak dinner fundraiser will now take place to raise additional funds for the program.

Events

In 2009 we participated in a Reach a Reader campaign with Merritt Herald and coordinated a book

exchange for school age children at a youth event. The purpose of the book exchange was to promote summer reading.

In 2010 we announced that May is Literacy Month in Merritt. City Council officially endorsed this announcement. The following events took place in May 2010:

- Literacy Merritt presentation to City Council
- School visits – the LOC and The Cat In the Hat visited two elementary schools to promote Literacy Month
- Community wide book exchange – this was held during youth week and symbolized the kick off to Literacy Month. We had music, free books, a fish pond, an early year's booth, a booth from Kindermusic and The Cat in the Hat. This outdoor event was challenged by inclement weather. This event was held in partnership with Community Policing and CFDC Nicola Valley – youth event.
- Reach a Reader campaign – held in partnership with Merritt Herald. Two volunteers dressed as Dolly Parton participated. Ten volunteers, including the Mayor, sold papers by donation. The LOC handled the coordination and administration of the program. All proceeds went directly to Dolly Parton Imagination Library.
- Literacy Pizza Party – a pizza party was held in partnership with Boston Pizza. Community members attended the event that included a Dolly Parton dress up volunteer, The Cat in the Hat, silent auction and toonie auction. All funds raised went directly to Dolly Parton Imagination Library. The LOC and volunteers coordinated this event.
- Plain Language – Literacy Merritt worked in partnership with Nicola Valley Institute of Technology to offer a Plain Language workshop to the community and our literacy partners. Literacy Merritt Task Force members were each offered two free seats in the workshop for their organization.
- Literacy awareness – columns were run in two local papers, interviews and event coverage was done by all five of the local media
- Sponsorship – Nicola Valley Institute of Technology, Rotary Club of Merritt and Merritt Morning Market all became sponsors of Dolly Parton Imagination Library during Literacy month. A business sponsorship package was developed in 2010 and is offered to local businesses.
- During Spring Break we partnered with Merritt Public Library to offer Games 2010 at the library. Elementary school children had the opportunity to attend the library each day and play interactive games. A coordinator was hired to work with the children. The event was planned by the Coordinated and marketing was done by the LOC. The LOC worked at the event on the

first day to assist with the start up. The positive outcomes of this event were new people in the library, large crowds each day, some new library cards issued.

- New-2-U Book Exchange: This summer we have partnered with Merritt's Music in the City 2010 to do a weekly book exchange at the outdoor performances held on Thursday evenings in July and August. On Canada Day Literacy Merritt gave away hundreds of books to all ages and asked people to come back each week to Music in the City to exchange it for another book.

Sustainability:

In 2009 Literacy Merritt focused on developing and delivering adult literacy programs. While those programs continue to be delivered in 2010, the Literacy Merritt Task Force has been focused on sustainability. The discussion around sustainability is about creating programs that will be legacies in the community and finding sustainable funding.

Community funding:

Literacy Merritt has chosen to support partner projects that promise sustainability. The projects supported to date are:

2010 MYFRS Girl's Group – teaching life skills to girls with disabilities – we purchased required recourse materials - \$500.00

2010 MYFRS Our Place – a daycare for teenage parents returning to high school – we purchased required resource materials - \$500.00

2010 MYFRS Speech Therapist – community speech therapist – purchased required resource materials - \$500.00

School District #58 Summer Reading Program – for children in grades 1-3 who are a year behind in reading who are receiving an additional 40 hours of instruction in July – we partnered with SD #58 to support the launch of the program. Literacy Merritt funding provided resource materials - \$3,434.00

Funding:

The 2010 Legacies funding has 18 months left in its three year funding cycle. This funding has been essential to creating Literacy Merritt, building community partnerships, developing programs and creating community awareness.

Three applications were submitted to Kamloops Raise a Reader. The organization later decided to limit their funding to Kamloops organizations, criteria that was not in the original funding package.

Literacy Merritt has applied to New Horizons for \$25,000.00 to expand the Computer Literacy for Senior's program. Decisions on this funding will be made later this year.

Literacy Merritt tried to seek support for ESL for adults through Kamloops Immigration services, but no funding was available. Literacy Merritt also worked with and supported the New Horizons grant applications submitted by Merritt Youth and Family Services and Merritt & District Chamber of Commerce for literacy based services.

The LOC continues to search for funding sources.

Reflections:

1. Literacy Merritt has had a major impact on filling some of the gap for adult literacy services. We have been successful at building community awareness and community partnerships. The outcomes of our work have been a successful task force that represents all sectors, delivery of adult programs, and ongoing media coverage.

The factors that contribute to the success of Literacy Merritt are:

- An experienced and dedicated task force that represents all sectors of the community
 - voluntarism
 - Masters level instructors delivering all programs
 - Instructors who are passionate about their programs
 - The LOC has 20 years of successful experience in the areas of communications, events, non-profit management, building community partnerships and community development
 - Evaluation of program delivery is done in the classrooms at the end of each course. Instructors then submit a report that includes recommendations, concerns, and student feedback. Evaluation of community partnerships is measured through repeat partnered programs and events and the continued support of the partners. Evaluation on creating community awareness is measured through direct feedback from the community.
2. The economic state of British Columbia is affecting literacy in our community. The declining forestry industry is forcing people who depend on large incomes to make career changes. This often requires the person to seek out a dogwood diploma. The local economy is putting more demand on programs like Dolly Parton Imagination Library and Strong Starts that provide services for free to the community. Literacy Merritt stays in contact with the Strong Start programs. We have supported the funding efforts of Dolly Parton Imagination Library in 2009 and 2010. The task force will be looking at ways to support adult literacy at their September 2010 meeting.
 3. The community development process is essential to the success of this program. Without our community partners we could not have successfully delivered any of our programs, events, fundraisers and community awareness campaigns.

Looking ahead:

4. There is an opportunity to work more closely with local government and the school district to build community literacy services. These opportunities will be pursued in 2010/2011. The vignettes developed by 2010 Legacies now will be key presentations made to City Council. We have made two presentations to City Council but we need to give a stronger more direct message of what we need from the local government to build community literacy. School District #58 has shown initiative and interest in working more closely with Literacy Merritt. Literacy Merritt has proposed a one to one tutoring program to the school district. This discussion will continue in September, with an anticipated start date of 2011.
5. 2011 will be our final year of start up funding. The focus will be on sustainability of all programs and sustainable funding. This was not a focus in the original plan.
6. Literacy Merritt requires support in accessing sustainable funding. We want to learn from other community literacy organizations that are sustainable. With the cancellation of the RLC at TRU, Literacy Merritt hopes to see this region take initiative and continue to meet quarterly. At the last meeting in April 2010, the LOC committed to making this effort.
7. Our progress in 2010/2011 will be measured through evaluation of program delivery, community participation in literacy activities, growth of volunteerism, obtaining sustainable funding, community partnership and expanded partnerships with local government and school district.

Report prepared by:

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Literacy Column

Newspaper column reprint on June 10, 2010

Merritt News

I submitted this column last week to celebrate the success of our 1st ever literacy month in Merritt. Imagine my surprise when I opened the paper to discover that my editorial photo was that of a friendly white haired gentleman with a passion for fishing and hunting. Shock quickly passed over to giggles from seeing my name published with someone else's photo. The photo mix up fit the theme of the mistaken column title and the fact that only ½ of the column appeared in the paper. Now with every mistake comes an opportunity to shine and I thank John O'Connor, Editor, for shining through because he had actually left me a message early that morning to apologize for the blooper. I only asked that he considered running the column again so that the final paragraphs could be included this time.

Literacy Month Success

May was literacy month Merritt and a whirl wind of activities floated through our community. We kicked off and ended the month with special appearances by one of our favorite literary characters – The Cat in the Hat. Cat brought a lot of attention, and readers of all ages, to our events. The Cat in the Hat was a character idea created by the famous Dr. Seuss back in 1957 as he searched for ways to interest young readers. What better way is there to inspire early readers than with the cheerful chaos and whacky tricks of a funny cat?

Literacy Merritt sponsored literacy month in Merritt with goals in mind. The first was to create awareness about literacy. We began our work by forming and strengthening our community partnerships, and then we rolled out literacy events through the month. Our activities spanned from presentations to City Council and Rotary, a community book exchange, Reach a Reader day, fundraising, public awareness campaigns and hanging out with our good friend Cat.

Our second goal during literacy month was to raise funds for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program. This is a successful program that provides a free book a month to children from birth through to their 5th birthdays, helping to inspire their passion for reading and prepare them for entering school. We have 150 children benefitting from this program through the generosity of our business sponsors, but we have 50 more children on a waiting list and a vision to reach many more early readers. We raised over \$2,000.00 during literacy month with all of the funding going directly into purchasing books for children.

We'd like to thank our partners who helped make Literacy Month in Merritt a success: Community Policing, Merritt Public Library, Interior Health, Merritt Youth and Families, School District #58, Merritt Herald, Boston Pizza, NVIT and City of Merritt. We especially thank the tireless volunteers who made the events a success and the many businesses that generously supported our fundraising initiatives.

While Literacy Month in Merritt has come to a close, and we have said farewell to our good friend Cat in the Hat, we still have a lot of work to do and so do you. Literacy matters everyday of the year from pregnancy through to senior years. You are never too young or old to expand your literacy skills. Reading, writing, arithmetic, storytelling, sports, music and in everyday life literacy is all around us, keep it close to you and share it with others.

For more information about Literacy Merritt programs, sponsorship opportunities or volunteering for literacy initiatives please contact Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, at 250 315 5851 or robyn@rbrandproductions.ca

January 26, 2010

For Immediate Release

Literacy Merritt Active in 2010

Merritt, BC – Despite large cuts to regional literacy contracts, Literacy Merritt is running at full capacity with an active year ahead.

“We are fortunate to have received no cuts to our community literacy budget,” comments Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator. “The budget cuts announced last year were all at the regional levels and the community literacy contracts have remained intact.”

In 2009 Literacy Merritt opened its doors in the community, under the umbrella of Merritt Youth and Family Resources Society.

“The focus last year was on forming a task force representing all levels of the community,” explains the coordinator. “Once we accomplished that we decided to focus on adult literacy, where the largest gap of services exists in our community. We successfully launched adult computer and ESL courses as a starting point.”

In 2010 Literacy Merritt, in partnership with the public library, is offering Computer Literacy for Senior’s and Adult ESL (English as a Second Language) courses throughout the year. These courses are offered free of charge and interested applicants can register at the public library.

Literacy Merritt is focused on literacy at all ages. A donation of \$3,000.00 was made to Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library project in 2009 and Literacy Merritt is now helping organize the volunteer committee who will run the program this year. “This is a very important program that provides children with a book a month from birth to their 5th birthday,” explains the coordinator. “There are currently 150 children sponsored on this program and we want to see it continue to expand.”

January 27, 2009 is officially Family Literacy Day in British Columbia and Literacy Merritt is joining Literacy BC and the rest of the province at exploring music as a form of literacy. “This is a fun way to plan an activity around BC’s Family Literacy Day,” explains the coordinator. “We encourage schools, groups, families and friends to have some fun with music. We also encourage you to make literacy an important part of your everyday life. At the foundation literacy is reading, writing and arithmetic and then it branches out into everything we do everyday.” Robyn continues announcing that Literacy Merritt is looking at the month of May as Literacy Month in Merritt. “We are going to be announcing some fun activities to consider in May, in the meantime call us if you would like to be involved in building a stronger community through literacy.”

“Now that the programs are up and running for this year the Literacy Merritt Task Force will be setting goals for the future,” says the coordinator. “Currently we are very focused on discussion around sustainability of our programs. We want to see the literacy seeds we plant in the community continue to grow well beyond our three years of funding.”

Literacy Merritt is a community project funded by 2010 Legacies Now and the Ministry of Education. Literacy Merritt is a community partnership project bringing partners together to support literacy needs in our community. The task force represents partners from school district, social development, business development, crime prevention, health care, early childhood education, adult education, aboriginal education and library.

For more information about Literacy Merritt contact:
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May is Literacy Month
Merritt, BC

Friday, May 7, 2010

12:00pm – 5pm **Community Wide Book Exchange** sponsored by Community Policing and Literacy
Merritt

Come down to the Spirit Square and exchange your gently used books and enjoy some music. There will be booths on display and special guests on site. Booths will include Dolly Parton Imagination Library, KinderMusic and more. The book exchange is for all ages. Anyone doing their spring cleaning prior to May 7th can drop off their book donations at the Community Policing Office on Quilchena Ave.

Wednesday, May 12th

9:00am – 5:00pm **Reach a Reader** sponsored by Merritt Herald and Literacy Merritt

Funds raised will support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Project. This important literacy project provides a book a free book a month to children from birth to age five. We currently have 150 young readers on the program and many more waiting for sponsorship. Watch for Dolly Parton tribute stars and literacy volunteers selling the Merritt Herald on May 12th. You can purchase the newspaper by donation with all funds supporting the children waiting for books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Watch for the literacy supplement in the May 12th edition of the Merritt Herald.

Monday, May 17th

10:00am – 4:00pm **Plain Language Workshop**, sponsored by NVIT and Literacy Merritt
location NVIT Registration \$25.00

Plain Language is workshop about the approach to communication that begins with the needs of the reader. Clear writing and design in plain language saves money, time and so much more. To register contact 250 315 5851 or robyn@rbrandproductions.ca

Wednesday, May 19th

5:00pm – 7:00pm **Literacy Pizza Party**, sponsored by Boston Pizza and Literacy Merritt

Location: Boston Pizza

Tickets: adults - \$15.00, youth \$12.00, under 5 eat for free, includes all you can eat pizza, auction and prizes. All funds raised will support the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Project

For more information about Literacy Merritt and Literacy Month activities contact:

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Literacy is Velcro

Merritt Herald Reach a Reader
Submitted by Robyn Grebliunas
May 10, 2010

I have sat down today with a freshly ground cup of cowboy coffee, feeling rather relaxed, only to experience that moment of panic. It's that moment when a writer begins a showdown with the intimidating blank screen. I am facing the task of writing about the literacy. Literacy is an enormous subject to write about. Perhaps I will be pouring my second cup of coffee before I decide where to begin and end within the boundaries of 500 words.

At the Literacy Merritt book exchange last week a generous gentleman dropped by with a donation of books that included wonderfully aged dictionaries and encyclopedias. Within the pages of the tattered 1946 dictionary, volume one A-L, I looked up literacy. The definition was the state or condition of being literate. That sounded like something that might need the doctor's attention. I read further to find the definition of literate, which was having knowledge of letters, able to read or write. Words are certainly the base of all literacy, but the meaning of literacy has recently grown very broad across our province as communities focus on literacy projects through the support of 2010 Legacies Now.

Where do we start then? Well it's never too early to get started. Literacy can start at conception. Prenatal intelligence, while a term that made me giggle, is a hot topic about the link between fetal stimulation and your child's intelligence. Put in more basic terms, you can start reading to your child during pregnancy and continue to develop your baby's love of books throughout their life.

Reading with your child from birth through their preschool years helps them develop a love of books and prepares them for kindergarten. Early years reading is about cuddle time and exploring stories through sounds and rhymes. Children will start to learn the stories from memory and begin reading to you. We've all been asked to read that favorite story over and over again. The fact that your child has a favorite story is a wonderful gift. Enjoy it and share that story with your child again and again.

Primary aged children will begin reading in school, but don't forget that literacy starts and ends at home. Teachers will be able to provide you with wonderful guidelines to help your child develop their literacy skills. Take the time to meet with the instructors. Then take those tips home and enjoy a story.

As your child's reading skills grow don't stop reading with them. Intermediate level students can enjoy reading with you by sharing the reading. You read a page, and then they read a page. Then advance to sharing chapters. Discuss the story. Reading is not just about getting the words right. It's about comprehension and understanding the story. Ask questions like what you think this story is about. You will be amazed at how your child is relating to the story.

Always use the three P's when reading with children. Pause and give your child an opportunity to correct a mistake. Prompt them with a little help when needed and always praise them for what they've accomplished.

As your child grows up you can have family reading times. Even if your 6 foot tall teenager doesn't want to read to you anymore they will appreciate reading when you do or an opportunity to discuss the story. It's wonderful when you have read the same book and can discuss the story.

Parents and caregivers are role models for literacy. Turn off the television, x-box, I-pod, computer, cell phones and other distracting devices and pick up a newspaper, magazine or book. We really do have to model to children that literacy is a wonderful tool. It's also a gift that allows us to venture through stories where we can experience the wonders of places like Hogwarts and see the world through the senses of someone amazing like Helen Keller.

I started out with the title of Literacy is Velcro. The title has stuck but it doesn't fit with my article. I have exceeded my story space just by walking through the years of reading with children and I have not reached a definition of literacy. Literacy is the ability to read and write. Literacy also includes numeracy or math skills. In our neighboring community of Princeton they are focused on sports literacy which focuses on the importance of physical and sports skills to help children grow. One of my favorites is music literacy, which is developing oral language through music. At Literacy Merritt we are currently focused on computer literacy for seniors and English as a second language for adult learners. The literacy menu is vast. So large in fact that 2010 Legacies Now is currently launching a community education campaign called Literacy is Velcro. Simply put literacy skills help everything else stick. We'll save that one for another day. Today you can start at home by being a literacy role model. Pick up a book and read with your child today and everyday. A book is a wonderful gift, a story is a grand adventure and a few moments with your child and a book is invaluable.



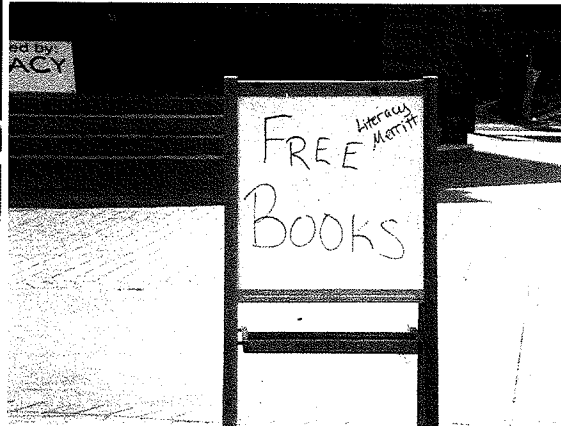
The Cat in the Hat visits local classrooms to promote Literacy Month – May 2010



Community Book Exchange Event – May 2010



MYFRS Early Years Booth



Book Exchange



Middle school volunteers



Community Policing Literacy Partners

for Adults **ENGLISH** AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Sponsored by Literacy Merritt

grammar
conversation
vocabulary
reading · writing
multi-cultural exchange
community introduction
and involvement

For more information contact:
Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator
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Dates:

September 7, 2010 to November 3, 2010

Location:

Merritt Public Library

Times:

2 one hour classes will be held during the week, schedule to be announced

Classes are FREE

Please register at Merritt Public Library