

For us in rural coastal Oregon the Ready To Read (RTR) funds help us reach children who have little to no access to summer learning and enrichment opportunities. While our community does have summer camps and other day programs these come with associated fees which are out of reach for many of our families.

The public library Summer Reading Programs, year after year, reliably offer free weekly programs (Pre-COVID 19, in-person programs), weekly crafts, free books, connections with friends, teachers, community members in intergenerational settings and the opportunity to check out books from the library.

Some years the RTR grant dollars help support other efforts, as we did this year in partnership with our local Head Start classes. Our 2021 program will allow us to get a free bilingual picture book to each child in the Head Start program. Many of the children enrolled are from Spanish speaking households. They will also receive craft kits to make homemade, no-cook play dough. This project/craft will further embellish on the theme of the book and provide the children with an opportunity for: measuring, learning new vocabulary, wondering, engaging in a healthy way with an adult in their life, creating, playing and perhaps singing, rhyming and so much more based on the additional resources we are providing with the play dough ingredients.

Additional funding to our rural community would open more doors for our Outreach Librarians to reach the children in our low income housing and the unhoused children living in motels; getting books and crafting materials to them by meeting them where they are. Our supplemental materials focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math). Any time we can connect with youth learners, we take that as an opportunity to introduce literacy skills in many forms; obviously there is reading literacy – which includes reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling, but also health literacy, numeracy literacy, and so much more.

Some specific ways we currently reach out to the youth we serve:

- monthly craft kits (at the library and by following the buses that deliver meals to children at home)
- book giveaways
- online programming
- occasional contests
- stocking the local "Little Free Libraries"
- free takeaway handouts (word puzzles, coloring sheets, mazes, story starters)

With further funding we can make any and all of the above activities occur more frequently, or reach other populations we are still identifying.

Thank you for this opportunity and for your time and consideration to enhance the funding for our libraries.

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