KEY TO THE CAPTIVE TEEN
Teens at Risk
Outreach Service to Teens in the Juvenile Justice System

Johnson County Library’s Outreach programs for youth in the Juvenile Justice System were designed in cooperation with the Juvenile Detention Center, the Department of Corrections, and Court Services. Representatives from these agencies met with the shared vision that reading ability is an important issue in dealing with youth offenders. The implementation of two programs emerged from these meetings, Read to Succeed, and Changing Lives Through Literature.

Read to Succeed is a Johnson County Library Outreach program designed for young adults in the County Juvenile Detention Center (JDC). In addition to providing a collection of paperback books for residents, library staff facilitate theme-based literature programs. Library staff visit the center twice a month during the school year and once a week during the summer to encourage and stimulate reading. Each Read to Succeed session includes book reviews, book talks and a read aloud selection. Youth are encouraged to participate in discussions about what they have read, and to make reading a continuing part of their lives. Sessions last about 45 minutes, are planned with a theme in mind and deal with issues of concern to teens - peer pressure, betrayal, anger, prejudice. A short story or a chapter from a book is read aloud to a group of 10-15 teens, followed by related questions and discussion. Residents and JDC staff are asked to tell about what they are reading. Residents can then select a paperback book from boxes brought by library staff.

Johnson County Library’s Changing Lives Through Literature is an alternative sentencing program for teens on probation, adapted from a successful program developed in Massachusetts. The goal is to reduce the number of repeat offenses and revocations of probation among participants. The program consists of a series of literary discussions based on assigned reading of contemporary young adult fiction with themes that resonate with teens. The books present problems, solutions and consequences that allow the participants an objective view of familiar situations. Library staff facilitate the discussions which serve between 8-12 young adults per session and meet for two hours every other week for 14 weeks. Discussion includes recognition of personal beliefs and how they may differ from socially accepted values. Participants are encouraged to answer questions about the characters - why they do what they do, and how they change in the course of the story. Most significantly, a judge and probation officer participate in each session. For more information, visit the program’s web site - http://www.umassd.edu/specialprograms/changing/home.htm

GOALS

• Increase awareness and visibility of the public library as an important community resource
• Provide interest and age-appropriate library materials and programs
• Provide positive role models and situations through various styles of literature
• Encourage problem-solving, decision-making and awareness of the responsibilities and consequences of actions through discussion of literature

Suggested Reading for Staff and Volunteers at the Johnson County Juvenile Detention Center


Visit these web sites: http://www.cjcj.org/ http://www.jocofamily.net/

Fiction stories about youth in juvenile detention settings


Suellentrop and McLellan, Johnson County Library

**A Year of Read to Succeed**

**January** Theme: Nonviolence / Martin Luther King Day
Read Aloud: “Priscilla and the Wimps” by Richard Peck from Who Do You Think You Are?: Stories of Friends and Enemies selected by Hazel Rochman.
Books Used: Words of Martin Luther King Strength to Love by Martin Luther King Ironman by Chris Crutcher
Questions: Who is MLK? In what did he believe? How did he get his message across? What is civil disobedience?

February  Theme: Attitude
Read Aloud: “The Fury” by T. Ernesto Bethancourt from Ultimate Sports: Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults edited by Donald R. Gallo
Questions: What should Randy have done? What do you think of the uncle’s treatment of the main character?

March  Theme: Sports
Read Aloud: “The Other Pin” by Chris Crutcher from Athletic Shorts
Books Used: Moves Make the Man by Bruce Brooks; Slam by Walter Dean Myers; Crash by Jerry Spinelli
Questions: Why do people get involved in sports? What does it mean to be part of a team? Why didn’t Petey want to fight Chris? How would you have solved this dilemma?

April  Theme: Biographies - Dean Koontz
Read Aloud: “Kittens” from The Dean Koontz Companion edited by Martin H. Greenberg; Dean Koontz: a Writer’s Biography by Katherine M. Ramsland
Books Used: This Boys Life by Tobias Wolf; Excerpts from The Air Down Here by Gil C. Alicea; Anne Frank; Tim Allen; Cal Ripken Jr. Struggle to Survive; October Sky.
Questions: Discuss relationship with his father. How does a person rise above that type of childhood? Why does he write what he writes? What about his subjects are interesting? Does reading this type of book make you want to do the things you read about? Do you think he is recycling the same story—similar to John Grisham, Danielle Steele, Mary Higgins Clark? What are the good and bad things about biographies? How do you know if they are truthful? What can you learn from biographies? What would you write if you were writing your biography? What if someone else is doing the writing?

May  Theme: Adventure
Read Aloud: “Two Boys on a Mountain” by William O. Douglas
Books Used: Into Thin Air & Into the Wild by John Krakauer; Hatchet by Gary Paulsen; Snow Bound by Harry Mazer
Questions: Why do these people take risks with their lives? How do they benefit from these activities? What risks do you take every day? Driving, riding in an airplane etc. What things would you not risk?

June  Theme: Trouble
Read Aloud: “Greasy Lake” by T. Coraghessan Boyle
Questions: What happened in this story? Do you know a place like Greasy Lake? What was their first mistake? What would you have done in this situation? How could they have handled it differently. Were they really “bad” characters?

July  Theme: Crime & Violence
Read Aloud: “Small Scams” by Gary Soto from Petty Crimes Statistics in Twelve Shots: Outstanding Short Stories About Guns edited by Harry Mazer
Books Used: The Rifle by Gary Paulsen; Swallowing Stones by Joyce McDonald
Questions: What are your thoughts about guns? Is it easy to get a gun? Should anyone be able to own a gun? What consequences should there be for people who are careless with their guns? Do you know how other countries handle the gun issue?

August  Theme: Books to movies - Reel Reads
Read Aloud: selection from “Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption” by Stephen King from Different Seasons
Books Used: Shoeless Joe by W.P. Kinsella; Horse Whisperer by Nicholas Evans; Dead Man Walking by Helen Prejean; The Hunt for Red October by Tom Clancy
Questions: Why is the book usually better than the movie? Does your “mental” movie match the actual movie? How would you edit the book into a screenplay?

September  Theme: Bad Days
Read Aloud: “A Reasonable Sum” by Gordon Korman from Connections: Short Stories By Outstanding Writers For Young Adults edited by Donald R. Gallo and Alexander and the Terrible Horrible No Good Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst
Questions: Describe a bad or embarrassing day you have experienced. How do you deal with a bad day? Can you stop yourself from having a bad day? When does a bad day become funny?

October  Theme: Science Fiction
Read Aloud: “The Wilding” by Jane Yolen from Twelve Impossible Things Before Breakfast and Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
Questions: Where in society is our outlet for energy? Can there ever be a place like Wild Wood Central? Would you go there if you could? What is a Max?

November: Theme: Community Service
Read Aloud: “Shacks to Mansions” or “Box Nine” by Rob Thomas from Doing Time: Notes From the Undergrad
Questions: Why is community service important? Why do people take time in their lives to do community service? Why is community service part of some high school graduation requirements?

December: Theme: Prejudice
Read Aloud: “A Brief Moment in the Life of Angus Bethune” by Chris Crutcher from Prejudice: A Story Collection or “The Photograph” by Bill Weaver from No Easy Answers edited by Donald Gallo
Questions: Have you ever felt prejudiced against? Have you ever been prejudiced against someone else? What causes one to feel prejudice? Can you change your feelings?

Suellentrop and McLellan, Johnson County Library
Collections of Short Stories Suggested for Young Adult Read-Aloud Programs

Collection of 11 short stories which focus on the difficult journeys teens take on their way to adulthood. “Sunday at Sidonie’s” (a boy’s father dies)

*Connections: Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults*. Ed. by Donald Gallo. Delacorte Press, 1989. A collection of 17 short stories by authors including Gordon Korman, Chris Crutcher, Richard Peck and M. E. Kerr spanning subjects that include penpals, the first day of high school, computers and family life. “A Reasonable Sum” (first day of high school); “As It Is With Strangers” (adoptive son meets biological mom); “White Chocolate” (angry kid - English teacher)


*From One Experience To Another: Award-winning Authors Sharing Real-Life Experiences Through Fiction*. Edited by Dr. M. Jerry Weiss & Helen S. Weiss. Tom Doherty Associates, Inc., 1997. A collection of fifteen short stories in which writers including Avi, Jay Bennett, and Joan Lowery Nixon draw upon their own childhood experiences. “My Brother’s Keeper” (brother asks him to lie); “The Truth About Sharks” (shoplifting); “Hamish Mactavish Is Eating a Bus”


*No Easy Answers: Short Stories About Teenagers Making Tough Choices*. Ed. by Donald R Gallo. Delacorte, 1997. Stories about teenagers in situations that test their character. “I’ve Got Gloria” (dog-napping); “The Photograph”; “Stranger” (girl in mirror); “Trashback” (computers)

*On the Edge: Stories at the Brink*. Edited by Lois Duncan. Simon & Schuster, 2000. A collection of twelve stories by different writers and in different genres in each of which a young person is physically and/or emotionally on the edge. “The Ravine” (teens flirt with danger cliff-jumping where another had died)


Rochman, Hazel & McCampbell, Darlene. *Leaving Home*. HarperCollins, 1997. Sixteen short stories reflecting the thoughts and feelings of young people as they leave home and make their way in the world. “Trip in a Summer Dress” (girl leaving to get married, leaving her child who was adopted by her parents)
A collection of short stories accompanied by short essays on censorship by twelve authors whose works have been challenged in the past.

Sixteen Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults.  Edited by Donald Gallo.  Delacorte Press, 1984.
Sixteen short stories, dealing with teenage concerns, written especially for this collection by authors such as M. E. Kerr, Robert Cormier and Richard Peck.  Biographical sketches included, as well as follow-up activities for the reader.  “Priscilla and the Wimps” (handling a bully); “Do You Want My Opinion?” (sharing ideas is considered intimate)

A collection of short stories about Mexican American youth growing up in California’s Central Valley.  “Little Scams” (young scammers get scammed) “The Funeral Suits”

A collection of 11 short stories by various authors including Andrea Davis Pinkney, M. E. Kerr and Anne Mazer about adolescent girls coming of age.  “Stay True” (girl loses friend)

Stories written by teens about their experiences in overcoming tough times.

Each of these ten short stories focuses on a high school student’s mandatory 200 hours of community service and the student’s response to the required project.  “Shacks” (football player); “Loss Pet” (library program); “Box Nine” (Thanksgiving delivery); “Laser” (son of high school principal helps janitor with English)


A collection of sixteen short stories about teenage athletes written by well-known authors in the field, including award-winning novelists Robert Lipsyte and Chris Crutcher.  “Fury” (boxing story loosely based on Mike Tyson)

A collection of 17 short stories exploring the theme of friendship.  “Priscilla and the Wimps” and selections by Tobias Wolff and Maya Angelou.

Collection of 13 science fiction short stories.  “The Wilding” (teens go wilding in the park - based on true story in Central Park)

Suellentrop and McLellan, Johnson County Library
Jan. 15 Short Stories:  
“Greasy Lake” by T. Coraghessan Boyle  
Discussion about the purpose of this program, what to expect

Jan. 29 *Ironman* by Chris Crutcher (181 pages hb, 228 pb)  
Due to an outburst with his English teacher, Bo Brewster is forced to join an anger management class at his school. In this class, with this group of misfits, he attempts to come to terms with his anger, with his father, with his teachers and with himself.

Feb. 12 *Night* by Elie Wiesel (109 pages)  
Personal narrative of the author’s experience as a 14-year-old in concentration camps in Germany during World War II.

Feb. 26 *Past Forgiving* by Gloria D. Miklowitz (153 pages)  
Fifteen-year-old Alexandra finds that her boyfriend Cliff demands all her time, isolates her by his jealousy, and finally becomes physically abusive.

March 12 *This Boy’s Life* by Tobias Wolff (288 pages)  
A memoir of Toby Wolff’s childhood, the book chronicles his growing up in desperate poverty with a string of stepfathers who abuse alcohol, his mother and him. It is a true story that deals with abuse, family issues, and becoming a man.

March 26 *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (180 pages)  
Given his lifetime assignment at the Ceremony of Twelve, Jonas becomes the receiver of memories shared by only one other in his community and discovers the terrible truth about the society in which he lives.

April 9 *Hero* by S.L. Rottman (134 pages)  
After years of abuse from his mother and neglect from his father, ninth-grader Sean Parker is headed for trouble when he is sent to do community service at a farm owned by an old man who teaches Sean that he can take control of his own life.

**EXPECTATIONS**

You will be expected to  
attend all sessions.  
read and finish all books.  
participate in discussions.  
follow along and listen to read aloud selections.
How have these sessions changed your view of reading?
“I have always loved reading.”
“They have encouraged me to read more.”
“I like to read it keeps my imagination moving!”
“I read more books now.”
“It really hasn’t, it just gives me a better view on different types of books.”
“Ever since you guys have been coming, I’ve read a lot more books than before.”
“I have always enjoyed literature, but it is great to see others become interested in reading.”
“A lot of the kids in here have little experience with books and reading in general.”

Why will you continue to read after you leave the detention center?
“To expand knowledge and creativity.”
“Because I have a baby and when I am at home I don’t have much to do.”
“Because it gives me something to do.”
“Because it is fun.”
“I have found a healthy way to escape reality and to relax. In books, you can be in a million places in a million ages.”

Why is hearing about what others have read helpful to you?
“I can tell if a book is good or not.”
“To help me decide what books I am interested in.”
“Gives me ideas on books to read.”
“I feel more open-minded.”
“Because I can see what other books I want to read.”
“Because it helps.”
“If I find someone with similar interests, we can recommend literature to each other.”

Would you recommend this program to other?
“Yes, because it opens up your mind to a more positive train of thought.”
“Yes, it was very, very beneficial.”
“Yes, because it will help you think before you act in life.”

Names any ways in which your involvement with the Changing Lives Through Literature program has changed or affected your life.
“It has made me realize that life is long and my situation now is only a bump in the road which will help me in the long run.”
“It made me read books and learn about other people’s view.”
“Made me open to opinions and had some affects on the ways I might think.”
“I started thinking about my life more. I thought it was one of the only helpful programs I’ve done.”

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