

Library Board Report
John and Judy Gay Library
March 2013
Prepared by Amy Albrecht, Library Coordinator

The John and Judy Gay Library staff was pleased to open full hours (64 hours/7days per week) on Monday, November 26th, 2013. In preparation for the increased hours, several steps needed to be taken. First, additional staff needed to be hired and trained. The new positions included: a Youth Services Librarian, a technology Librarian, a senior technician, a full time library assistant, and three part time library assistants. A second step involved the Library Director working with the City of McKinney Communications and Marketing Department to advertise the new hours throughout the community. Library staff also handed out bookmarks with the revised hours, posted signs in the library, and spoke to patrons about the excitement leading up to the big day. The third step encompassed several smaller tasks such as making each staff desk area ready (this is the first time every desk has been used), arranging for an additional recycling pickup, and coordinating the updating of the hours on the front glass doors. The community has embraced the new hours and now uses the location in the evenings, on Sundays, and Mondays. Staff continues to feel a sense of pride as the John and Judy Library has been able to offer not only the extended hours, but also more youth programs, adult programs, and a space for the people within the community to gather, study, and learn.

The John and Judy Gay Library served as a polling place for early elections and also on Election Day in October and November 2012. This was a prime opportunity for staff to reach out to patrons about our extended hours. Because the elections generated such a large number of people visiting this location, it was common for staff to register over 100 new library cards a day. I also used this time for some staff development as JJGL hosted, "JJGL – Decision 2012" and staff voted on several very important issues – Celery vs. Carrots, Buzz vs. Woody, and Twinkies vs. Ding Dongs. It was reported the JJGL was the second most attended polling location in 2012. The library is slated to be a polling location again in 2013.

Programming attendance has been at an all-time high at JJGL. Preschool programs are presented on Wednesday and Thursday mornings and it is common for parents and excited children to start lining up at the door each day about 15 minutes before we open. We have also started hosting a Tuesday evening Family storytime with attendance of between 25-30 patrons each week. School age and teen programs round out the successful youth programming rotation. With the extended hours and additional staff, JJGL has also hosted several eReader classes for adults. These classes have had high attendance prompting staff to restructure the classes into two separate classes, one for Kindle users and a second class for Nook users.

Along with being used for programming, the large meeting room is also available for the public to rent out for events. JJGL has seen a dramatic increase in room rentals with the extended hours. Several times a week, the room is rented by community members for various functions and activities. The room has also hosted a Strategic Planning meeting for City Council and all the City Directors in January. This was quite a busy day as the meeting and several busy storytime programs ensued at the same time. JJGL has also seen an increase in the usage of the computer lab. It is common for the computer lab to be full with all the computers in use prompting the use of our reservation system.

The extended hours have also allowed staff the opportunity to interact and get to know our patrons better. I had one chance encounter with a mom and her two boys. The mom had paid for several books that her boys, William, age 4 and Charlie, age 2, had damaged beyond repair. She spoke to me one day and we arranged a meeting with Charlie and William at the library. I spoke with the family about three simple rules of using library books.

- We don't eat or drink while we are reading. (Charlie confirmed that apple juice was still okay at other times.)
- We wash and dry our hands before reading a library book.
- We are very careful with the books to not tear the pages or covers. (William asked if books were like "treasure" and I quickly agreed as it moved our conversation along.)

After our meeting, William and Charlie both drew pictures for me. Charlie's picture depicts snakes because "snakes are bad just like tearing up books." William's picture illustrates what is good to do with a book (read, place on a shelf) and what he will not do with a book (stand on it, tear the pages, or put on the floor). I keep the pictures in my office as a reminder of good thoughts and good days.

As prearranged with the mom, the boys each checked out one book. After two weeks, both boys returned to the library to show me they had taken good care of the books. William and Charlie were awarded with high fives, a library crown, and were allowed to check out two books this time. The experience was rewarding for me as a librarian and I have also shown the boy's pictures at the Youth Services and Librarian's meeting to discuss the power and rewards of one chance interaction with our patrons. The chance to build positive relationships within our community is both an awesome and humbling responsibility of our job. Currently, I see both Charlie and William at programming each week and recently was introduced to their baby sister, Claire.

Upcoming opportunities for JJGL include continuing to promote our extended hours throughout the community, preparing for a busy summer, training of new staff members, and promoting the sign up and completion of the Summer Reading programs for youth of all ages. I am happy and motivated to lead this team into the future as JJGL continues to grow and become an even more valuable resource for the community.