

GUYS READ 2013-2014 ANNUAL PROGRAM SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guys Read was once again very successful this school year, attracting nearly every 4th grade boy to the lunch-time readings, and dozens of families to the public library parties. All eighteen school libraries received three copies of each of the eight new Guys Read titles.

Last summer Guys Read won the American Library Association's Public Library Association Innovations in Literacy Award. As part of this award, Greg Hill represented Guys Read at the June 2013 ALA conference and the 2014 PLA conference. He and his wife staffed Guys Read exhibit booths at the 2014 PLA and Alaska Library Association conferences.

Local funding sustained the cost of this year's Guys Read. Donations from twenty local businesses, service clubs, organizations, and individuals underwrote the program. Guys Read Gals Read Committee members contributed time and money, and Greg and Clare Hill acted as volunteer Guys Read program administrators and coordinators, thereby saving the program nearly half its budget. Work continues on attracting a sustaining grant. In the meantime,

Guys Read program spin-offs are doing well in communities around the state, and there is strong interest in other communities both in Alaska and the Lower 48.

PROGRAM SUCCESS

Fourth grade is when most boys stop reading for pleasure, and the goal of Guys Read is to encourage 4th grade boys to experience how fun reading can be. This year's edition of the Fairbanks Public Library's Guys Read program closely resembled the success of the previous seven:

- Nearly all of the 532 4th grade boys enrolled in the eighteen public elementary schools with 4th grades attended all eight Guys Read presentations;

- Over forty men volunteered as readers, many reading multiple times a week, and a dozen more contributed time and energy to assisting the program,
- Twenty local organizations, businesses, and private individuals contributed the funding necessary to buy three copies of the eight Guys Read books for each school library, stage the parties at the public library, and promote the program. These include Design Alaska, Oceanic Research, Lynden Transport, Fairbanks Central Labor Council, Fairbanks Rotary Club, and
- The FNSB Library Services Department provided secretarial support, storage and training space, and bookmarks used in the program to promote the books and the public library parties.

PROGRAM CHANGES

There were some big changes in this year's Guys Read programming:

- The organization of Guys Read has become a program of the Fairbanks Library Foundation, which allows donations to Guys Read to fall under the FLF's 501c3 tax exempt status. Gals Read is now a program of the Literacy Council of Alaska, but continues to stage its final parties at the public library. The Fairbanks Library Foundation's Guys and Gals Read Committee coordinates both programs to maximize their efficiency.
- The program was staged in two two-week segments. Each school received four Guys Read presentations the first two weeks in October 2013, and four more the last two weeks in January, 2014. This was in response to school staff request to begin the program earlier to excite the boys about reading near the beginning of the school year, and to break it into two parts to heighten the boys' interest.
- Volunteers were recruited beginning with a volunteer appreciation barbeque held in August. Advertising for volunteers was purchased for two weeks in September, and eight training sessions were held at Noel Wien Library prior to the readings in October. Splitting the program entailed additional administrative activities, particularly contacting and training volunteers again in January and familiarizing them with the books. It also required earlier selection, purchasing, and processing of the books.

- Inclement weather the last week in January forced the rescheduling of some of the readings into early February. However, the schools were very cooperative and accommodating.
- Raising the necessary funds was once again very close. My wife and I volunteered to perform the administration side of Guys Read (purchasing the books, contacting schools and librarians, contacting, training, and scheduling readers, etc.), and thereby reduced the overall program budget significantly.
- The schools have begun converting from document cameras to iPods for projection. Laser pointers used to indicate where the reading is taking place don't work on the flat-screens used by iPods. A workaround for the lasers must be determined and plans must be made for training volunteers in using the iPods.
- The program title was revised to "Alaska Guys Read" to separate it from the many other library programs called Guys Read that almost invariably involved book discussion groups, or other activities that attract primarily boys who already enjoy reading. The Alaska Guys Read attracts even low-level readers to books and draws non-users into the public library.

THE PARTY

The two Guys Read parties were held at Noel Wien Library on Saturday, February 1. This conflicted with the Yukon Quest start in downtown Fairbanks (they selected their date after the Guys Read party date was chosen last summer), reducing the number of boys attending the parties significantly. However, there was a greater percentage of parents in attendance.

The parties featured special appearances by David Petersen, the author/illustrator of the award-winning Mouse Guard graphic novels (which have been featured Guys Read books), who Skyped into both parties, read his latest creation, answered questions, and drew the boy's favorite characters. Mr. Petersen did this at no charge, saying he wanted to support Guys Read in any way he can. The UAF Athletic Department donated tickets to their sporting events, and the Comic Shop in town donated free age-appropriate comic book. In addition, every boy received a free book drawn from the volunteer readers'

practice books and other books donated or purchased for the program. Barnes and Noble donated bags to hold the door prizes.

PROPOSED PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS

Splitting the usual four weeks of Guys Read presentations into two two-week segments worked well. Beginning the readings in October roused the boys' interest in books and reading sooner in the school year. Continuing the readings in January served to heighten and sustain the boys' interest. We propose scheduling the Guys Read presentations next Oct. 6-18 and Jan. 19-30, with the parties held on Oct. 19 and Jan. 31 respectively.

Holding parties after the first two-week session, as well as at the program's over-all conclusion, will help draw more non-library using boys and their families to Noel Wien Library. It will also mitigate unfortunate scheduling coincidences, such as the Yukon Quest starting at the same time as the Alaska Guys Read parties. The additional parties will require more funding, volunteer effort, and the development of new party activity ideas.

Immediate goals include locating a long-term sustaining program business partner, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Alaska Guys Read approach, improving the GuysGalsRead.org webpage, and developing videos of book readings, and training demonstrations.

THE PLA INNOVATIONS IN LITERACY AWARD

Last summer it was announced that Guys Read won the Public Library Association's first Innovations in Literacy Award. PLA is a division of the American Library Association, so I attended the ALA annual conference in Seattle to receive the award from the ALA president. The award included a \$1,000 travel grant to attend the bi-annual PLA conference in Indianapolis in March 2014 to promote Guys Read. Jim Duncan, the president of the Alaska State Employees Union, donated air miles to make the trip possible, and the ASE local also contributed to the travel expense, and I contributed the remainder.

Funding from the Fairbanks Library allowed the purchase of colorful, descriptive cards that describe the program the program and a large banner and stand. These drew a great deal of interest at the library conferences, particularly the inclusion of “Alaska” in the program title.

Guys Read won the National Association of Counties’ Academic Achievement Award in 2010 and has been nominated for another major literacy award.