

Christian County Literacy Council, Inc., Hopkinsville, KY. Bev Thompson, Director.

Mission Statement

Our mission is two-fold: (1) to reach out and serve the undereducated adults in our community and (2) to break the cycle of illiteracy in Christian County through reaching all families of young children and raising awareness of the importance of a sound education.

History

The Christian County Literacy Council began operations in 1986. The literacy council funds its projects through special projects, memberships, and donations. In 2004, the program was one of three national finalists for the Family Literacy Alliance Advocacy Champion Award.

Summary of Projects

Community Reader Day: On-going since March 1991

- Purpose: to involve the entire community in talking about the importance of reading.
- Sponsored on an annual basis.
- Sends over 200 community volunteers into every elementary school classroom in the county to read to children the same story.

Project Born to Read: On-going since April 1996

- Purpose: to send the community's children to school better-prepared for learning to read.
- Provides free books (compliments of Christian County Extension Homemakers), bibs with the Born-to-Read logo (compliments of Jennie Stuart Medical Center), and reading tips to families of newborns at Jennie Stuart Medical Center.
- Provides reading tips and books to six-month olds and one-year olds through the local pediatricians' offices and the Christian County Health Department.
- Reaches approximately 600 families each year with the important message to read to infants and toddlers daily.

BOOKENDS Family Reading Club: On-going since August 1999

- Purpose: to encourage more reading in the children's homes and to send children to kindergarten better-prepared to learn to read.
- BOOKENDS is a family reading club that provides the parents and children enrolled in public schools' at-risk four-year-old preschool program a monthly opportunity to celebrate reading and character development. Each month, the parents come together with their children to receive a free character-building book, to enjoy theme-related activities, refreshments, and fellowship with each other. The most powerful action a parent can take to improve their children's chances for school success is to read to them daily. Over 100 (out of 350) preschool families have attended monthly BOOKENDS' meetings since the club's inception.
- Funded initially through a grant from the Dollar General Foundation, it has been continued locally through support from the Christian County Schools At-Risk

Preschool Program, Even Start grant, the Tapestry Foundation, and donations to the literacy council.

- The first group of BOOKENDS children entered kindergarten in the fall of 2000. The percentage of children scoring at the "expected age level" in receptive language on the Early Prevention to School Failure (EPSF) screening rose to 60%. (From the years 1991 through 1999, this percentage had ranged only between 29% - 40%.) BOOKENDS continued in the 2000-2001 school year, and in the fall of 2001, the EPSF indicated 58% entering school at the expected age level in receptive language.

Advisory Board to the local adult education program: On-going since 1986

- Purpose: To ensure that the needs of undereducated adults in our community are met to break the cycle of illiteracy.
- Oversees and advises activities of the adult education program to ensure that the needs of undereducated adults are met in our community.
- Emphasizes a special commitment to family literacy, since this has the biggest impact on breaking the cycle of illiteracy in our community.

Concluding Statement

Program director Bev Thomson states, "We have a local literacy council that is a 501c3 agency, which directly supports our total adult education program through private donations and through foundation grants. The literacy council received funding from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation (around \$12,000, for two years and around \$7,000 another year) and also from the Tapestry Foundation (around \$30,000 for two years). We started receiving local United Way funds this year. After making our school district superintendent more aware of what family literacy is and whom we reach, he authorized the funding of one full-time teacher through the district's general fund."