Community/Public Service Worksheet

Service Category: Educational Outreach Programs

Title: Book Bonanza for the Black Belt

Primary UA Contact(s): Dr. Jamie Naidoo (name) School of Library and Information (Office) (Office)

Community Partner(s) (if any): (name) (Organization) (name) (Organization)

Program Description: If we want to give all children in the state of Alabama an equal education, we must start them all on an equal level. Children in many schools in the Black Belt are using books with outdated information. How can we expect them to be as successful as children in schools who have the latest cutting edge information available via school library books not to mention technology resources! Studies show that by 4th grade many children’s interest in reading begins to wane. Studies also indicate that an early interest in reading is the key to future success as an adult. Providing high-interest, new school library books to children in the Black Belt helps to ignite and stoke their passion for reading. Established in 2009 by UA professor Dr. Jamie C. Naidoo, the SLIS Book Bonanza for the Black Belt is an annual program that donates new, free children’s and teen books to school libraries in the state’s Black Belt region each December. School librarians in the Black Belt region are asked to apply for the book give-away program in mid-November.

Objectives/Outcomes: School libraries in the Black Belt typically have fewer library books available per student than school libraries in areas of the state outside the Black Belt. As such, fewer books per student compounded with outdated library materials equates to a crucial need for school library books. The objective/goal of the Book Bonanza for the Black Belt Program is to provide children in the Black Belt region of the state with high-quality, up-to-date reading and informational materials in order to spark their interest in reading and assist in closing the educational gap between low and high-income socioeconomic areas of the state.

Assessment Measures: Assessment of the goal of providing children in the Black Belt region of the state with high-quality, up-to-date reading and informational materials is measured by the increase in new reading materials donated to winning schools. Donated materials represent high-interest, current year children’s and teen books that are chosen for their quality and appeal. Anecdotal evidence in the form of letters and photographs from school librarians provide evidence of increased student interest in reading and usage of new books.

Results: In 2012, the program provided over $7,600 in free books to be enjoyed by children and young adults in the Black Belt Region of the state. In 2013, the program received
applications from 22 highly deserving schools and chose 8 school libraries to receive over $1000 each in brand new books. The judging of the applications is rigorous, as every school

**Conclusions:** I believe this program is effective in providing new, relevant library materials to school libraries that may not otherwise be able to purchase new materials. The applications each year indicate the lack of funding for new materials and the average copyright date of informational materials for many schools applying is 1970. The new materials the library receives from this program allows librarians to discard outdated information and provides current informational materials for student learning.

**Improvement Actions:** Currently, winning school libraries must travel to Tuscaloosa to retrieve their awarded books. Some school librarians have difficulty receiving leave time to visit SLIS and receive their new books. We would hope to have funds in the future to mail books to the winning