

\$10,000 for “Bright Spot”

Boys & Girls Clubs of Redlands Gets Grant from Walmart

By Joy Juedes, Staff Writer

REDLANDS DAILY FACTS & SAN BERNARDINO SUN

August 30, 2010

REDLANDS - The Boys & Girls Clubs of Redlands has received a grant to encourage teens to read.

The organization received \$10,000 from the Walmart Foundation to start a "Bright Spot for Reading," which promotes both educational and leisure reading. Program services director Mark Davis started the Redlands clubs' Bright Spot program in June.

"The impetus was to start in summer to stop the brain drain," said CEO P.T. McEwen.

The program, which partners with the A.K. Smiley Public Library, features books geared at ages 11 to 15. Readers are given incentives, including movie tickets and trips to Pharaoh's Adventure Park.

"It's not just books, they can read magazine articles, newspaper articles, on the Internet - it's just to get kids reading, period," Davis said.

The Redlands clubs have Bright Spots at the Dennis Hansberger Clubhouse in Redlands and Waterman Gardens in San Bernardino.

So far more than 30 students have participated, according to the organization. They give reading reviews to their peers, and go to the library every Wednesday. In the future, Davis hopes to have them read to senior citizens, and will work with more local libraries.

"Teenagers are funny," Davis said. "At first, I thought the kids weren't going to enjoy it. But as they get into what they're reading, they're not just reading."

"It's getting to the point where now teens are looking forward to going to the library on Wednesdays and reading and experiencing what the library is all about," he said.

Students might also become interested in careers as librarians, Davis said.

"He said they would be coming once a week and showing them how to use the library," said youth services librarian Pamela Karr, who said Davis contacted her in spring. The Boys & Girls Club group likely uses the young adult section downstairs, she said. The Young Readers' Room has books up to ages 12 and 13, she said.

A website, www.myclubmylife.com, features age-appropriate books and book reviews and encourages students to read and share their experiences.

The Walmart Foundation awarded Boys & Girls Clubs of America \$1.5 million to help establish reading Bright Spots at 100 locations.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Redlands received a \$30,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation in June for its "Be Great: Graduate" program. The program encourages 13-year-olds to stay in school.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Redlands serves Redlands, Loma Linda, Mentone and San Bernardino. Locations are open 2 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday. Information: 909-798-4599.

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