Maricopa County Reads

2023 Summer Reading Program

Summary & Report

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Overview

Maricopa County Library District (MCLD) is proud to share the success of its annual online countywide Summer Reading Program. From June 1st to August 1st all public libraries, two tribal libraries, one military library, one volunteer library (65 locations, representing 19 library systems), and the Maricopa County Durango Juvenile Facility encouraged over 86,000 county residents to participate in our Summer Reading Program. Libraries experienced record number participation and achievement this year putting the county wide program numbers above 2019, our last pre-pandemic summer. This year the Maricopa County Sherriff's Office Library opted out of the reading program to restructure their library and reevaluate participation in the program; we hope to see them back in 2024.

Our primary goals for the 2023 Summer Reading Program were to interrupt the summer slide and promote literacy among children and families. To meet those goals our objectives focused on encouraging parents and caregivers to model positive reading behaviors to their children by participating in the Summer Reading Program themselves, promoting reading at least twenty minutes a day to create a reading habit, and build home libraries. In addition to milestone incentives, we incorporated multiple strategies to achieve these objectives into the Great Reading Adventure software and offline in our marketing strategy by building relationships in communities.

Each year we build the Summer Reading Program around a theme provided by the Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP). This year we explored what friendship, unity and kindness means with "All Together Now/ Todos Juntos Ahora". The Arizona State Library supplies supporting materials created by CSLP to each of the participating libraries. MCLD staff and representatives from the 19 library systems planned a comprehensive program that included a paper game board and an interactive online platform where participants record reading minutes and other activities, are awarded digital badges, complete challenges and community experiences, redeem prizes and sponsored incentives, and participate in free and engaging virtual and in-person events. MCLD and our partner libraries also build a comprehensive marketing campaign to spread awareness.

Though our partnership with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office was put on pause this summer we continued to provide a Summer Reading Program for the youth in the Maricopa County Durango Juvenile Facility. Just like our program with adults experiencing incarceration, this program positively affects these children by encouraging them to read for learning and enjoyment while incentivizing them with the same prizes and free book that all participants are able to earn. 91 youth participated this year and 29 made it to 1,000 earning them a free book to keep.

Goals and Outcomes

The two primary goals of the Summer Reading Program are:

1. Interrupt the summer slide, the common term given to the learning loss experienced by children while transitioning between school years.
2. Promote literacy among children and their families.

The objectives (in bold) and strategies employed to accomplish our two larger goals included:

1. **Increase the number of non-readers and non-library users**
   - Compared to 2022, maintain the number of participants and achievers.
   - Add visibility to disability by creating disabled avatar parts to build avatars.
   - Create training videos for the basics of SRP to increase staff understanding and engagement.

2. **Emphasize the fun of reading**
   - Compared to 2022, maintain the number of minutes read for the countywide reading minute goal and share tracking either as a built-in feature or shared on the dashboard.
   - Create a gameboard page in the software to outline their use in the program.

3. **Building a home library**
   - Provide a free book or option to donate their book to a Head Start classroom to all participants who reach 1,000 points during the program.

4. **Communicate literacy messages in simple, easy to understand ways**
   - Utilize prereader game board messaging in the software to encourage the completion of the early literacy tasks.
   - Compared to 2022, increase early literacy challenge completions by 2% using the new challenge group carousel feature, dashboard carousel, and social media.

5. **Connect participants with community experiences**
   - Compared to 2022, maintain the number of community experience visits by tracking the secret code redemptions.
   - Challenge systems to create at least one community experience.

Using the Great Reading Adventure software or optional paper game board, participants work towards a total reading goal of 1,000 minutes in 9 weeks by reading at least twenty minutes a day, building a habit of reading. The program promotes lifelong learning to our teen and adult participants who are also

encouraged to model positive reading behaviors to the children or non-readers in their lives as they work towards their own reading goal. Participants earn incentives at point milestones along the way including free food coupons at 500 points, an Arizona State Park Pass and up to 4 tickets to a Phoenix Mercury home game at 750 points, and a free book at 1,000 points. Each milestone incentive serves as a motivator for all ages to reach their reading goal which helps build home libraries, an important aspect of increasing children's literacy success, whether they chose a book for themselves or donate it to a Head Start classroom.

This year the focus was creating engaging experiences for our participants and increasing communication around the features of the program. To meet these goals new avatar pieces representing parts of the disabled community were added, the county wide reading minute goal tracker was shared at the top of a participant's dashboard, and early literacy challenges were featured in a carousel at the top of the Challenges page. Systems were also challenged to come up with at least one community experience for their participants and we jumped from 98 to 174 available community experiences. All of these work towards a feeling of community within the reading program and engagement with all the program has to offer.

Overall Statistics

The Summer Reading Program encourages readers of all ages to participate and is broken out into four age groups: Pre-readers (Birth to 4), Kids (5 to 11), Teens (12 to 17) and Adults (18+). 86,139 participants registered online from May 1 to August 1 which is a 6,640 participant increase over last year. Of those, 40,107 became achievers earning at least 1,000 points, an achiever rate of 46.5%, 1.5% up over last year.

- 85,262,296 minutes read
- 1,255,452 digital badges earned
- 52,569 challenges completed
- 29,019 free books awarded and redeemed by achievers
- 1,620 free books donated to local Head Start classrooms
- 93 participants at the Durango juvenile detention center

The following figures illustrate Summer Reading participation and achievement over the past 4 years starting in 2020, the first pandemic year through rebuilding the program to 2023 our first real year back to normal operations at all participating libraries.
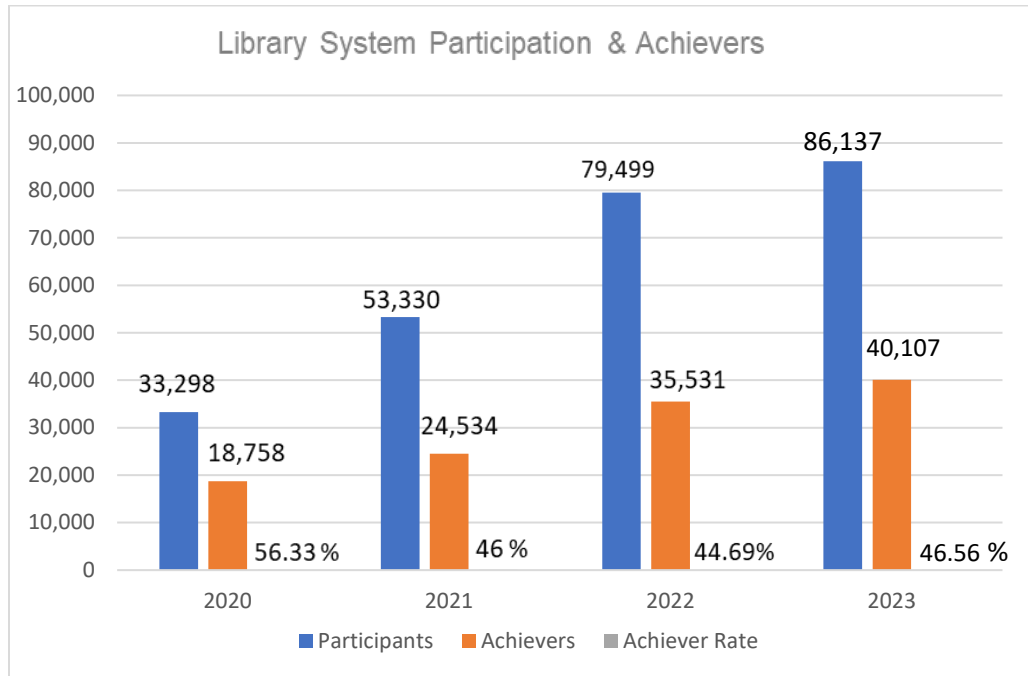

Figure 1: System wide Participants and Achievers 2020-2023

2023 Participants and Achievers by Library System

Library System	Total Participation	Total Achievers	Rate of Achievement
Avondale Public Library	1,350	527	39.0%
Buckeye Public Library	3,247	1,467	45.2%
Chandler Public Library	9,497	4,830	50.9 %
Desert Foothills Public Library	302	105	34.8%
Fort McDowell Tribal Library	83	20	24.1%
Glendale Public Library	3,795	1,885	49.7%
Luke Air Force Base Library	106	56	52.8%
Maricopa County Library District	15,634	7,929	50.7%
Mesa Public Library	10,752	5,267	49.0%
Morristown Volunteer Library	11	4	36.4%
Peoria Public Library	3,824	1,811	47.4%
Phoenix Public Library	23,581	9,360	39.7%
Salt River Tribal Library	425	108	25.4%
Scottsdale Public Library	6,658	2,871	43.1%
Surprise Public Library[1]	2,534	1,252	49.4%
Tempe Public Library	3,845	2,349	61.1%
Tolleson Public Library	295	176	59.7%
Wickenburg Public Library	109	48	44.0%
Youngtown Public Library	89	42	47.2%

Figure 2: 2023 Participant and Achievers by Library System

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[1] This year the City of Surprise assumed operations of their libraries, statistics will be broken out by 19 systems now instead of 18.

Breaking our statistics down by age group, we can see which groups reach 1,000 points at the highest rates and where we see the most growth. The teens continue to have the highest achiever rate at 53% followed closely by adults with 52%. The adult program had the biggest jump in participant sign ups, growing by 4,668 which accounts for 70% of our total growth this year.

Participants and Achievers by Program & Library System

Library System	Prereaders		Kids		Teens		Adults	
	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers	Signups	Achievers
Avondale Public Library	221	78	541	165	146	73	442	211
Buckeye Public Library	491	164	1,610	772	333	158	813	373
Chandler Public Library	1,160	551	4,283	1,934	1,453	872	2,602	1,473
Desert Foothills Library	40	15	134	37	38	17	90	36
Fort McDowell Yavapai Tribal Library	15	6	19	4	5	0	44	10
Glendale Public Library	513	250	1,540	641	505	267	1,238	726
Luke Air Force Base	15	9	47	18	9	4	35	25
Maricopa County Library District	1,787	818	6,981	3,069	2,184	1,269	4,681	2,772
Mesa Public Library	1,629	749	4,296	1,922	1,259	674	3,569	1,923
Morristown Volunteer Library	2	0	4	0	0	0	5	4
Peoria Public Library	472	191	1,678	660	488	291	1,186	669
Phoenix Public Library	3,061	1,061	9,936	3,666	2,656	1,131	7,928	3,504
Salt River Tribal Library	29	5	184	43	71	15	141	45
Scottsdale Public Library	958	370	2,837	1,044	705	388	2,159	1,069
Surprise Public Library	315	150	1,067	449	329	175	823	477
Tempe Public Library	350	180	1,781	1,179	378	238	1,336	752
Tolleson Public Library	38	24	137	84	35	19	85	49
Wickenburg Public Library	14	4	51	22	19	12	25	10
Youngtown Public Library	12	4	22	5	5	2	50	31
TOTALS	11,122	4,629	37,148	15,714	10,618	5,605	27,252	14,159

Figure 3: 2023 Participants and Achievers by age and library system

Marketing

Each summer, MCLD launches a countywide promotional campaign with the goals of bringing awareness to the program for both new and previous participants, and increasing participant and achievement numbers. This summer, MCLD focused its promotional messages around being a part of a community of readers, the intrinsic impact of the program, and achieving points to win prizes.

The Library District also creates and shares a wide range of marketing support to all participating library systems. In its continued effort to provide increased support to these libraries, MCLD created additional materials for the Marketing Toolkits this year. The new materials included a ready-made social media advertisement, a PeachJar template, access to additional Canva templates, and an Achievement Toolkit.

The Summer Reading Advertising Pool partnership continued this summer. This optional support allows library systems to buy into in a large-scale advertising campaign, giving access to a dedicated marketing staff who will coordinate and analyze digital campaigns on their behalf. Three library systems participated in 2023: Chandler, Mesa, and Scottsdale Public Libraries. Through the Advertising Pool campaigns, MCLD aided in serving 223,419 digital advertising impressions between the three library communities.

MCLD's independent advertising campaign featured a mix of digital, print and podcast advertising. The results of the campaign were successful with highlights being:

- The digital elements of the campaign resulted in 30,094 engaged sessions on MaricopaCountyReads.org
- 17,944 new users were brought to MaricopaCountyReads.org via the advertising campaign
- 1,601 Secret Codes were entered from the various advertisement placements

Software

This year's enhancements to The Great Reading Adventure, the software that powers Maricopa County Reads, streamlined the experience for staff and added some new interactivity for participants. Participants are now able to see a list of their prizes and where they are able to redeem them. There is also a community goal shown at the top of the dashboard page which all participants contribute to. For staff, the management interface continues to improve with better handling of vendor interactions (packing slip improvements including hold slips and the ability for administrators to reassign free book

codes covering books which have run out of stock). The software has been upgraded to the latest ASP.NET 7 platform and remains free and open source software, available for download at:

https://github.com/MCLD/greatreadingadventure

Game Content

When participants login, they land on their individual dashboard to view their digital badges, personalized avatars, and bilingual early literacy tips for prereaders 0-4 from Expect More Arizona and Smart Talk graphics from Read On Arizona. The dashboard is also home to pertinent Summer Reading information like dates and prize information, and links to fun literacy resources for kids. Our community reading goal tracker was also made available to view on the dashboard this year so participants could log in and see how many minutes this community had read. This year the goal was 65,000,000 minutes which we surpassed, hitting over 85,000,000 minutes by August 1.

Digital badges continued to be an integral part of the 2023 Summer Reading Program to mark program achievements (program registration, point milestones) and to indicate the completion of in-game challenges many of which promote our community partners and community experiences. Badges are a valued piece of the program by our participants as they add motivation and incentive for participants to continue logging their reading throughout the 9 weeks of the Summer Reading Program.

Avatars were made more inclusive this year with the addition of disabled options such as a wheelchair, cane, and prosthetic arm or leg. Since they allow for personalized engagement with the program we wanted to make sure disabilities were represented for those that wish to see themselves in their characters. Avatar accessory bundles such as swimwear, animals, and evening wear were unlocked throughout the program keeping participants engaged.
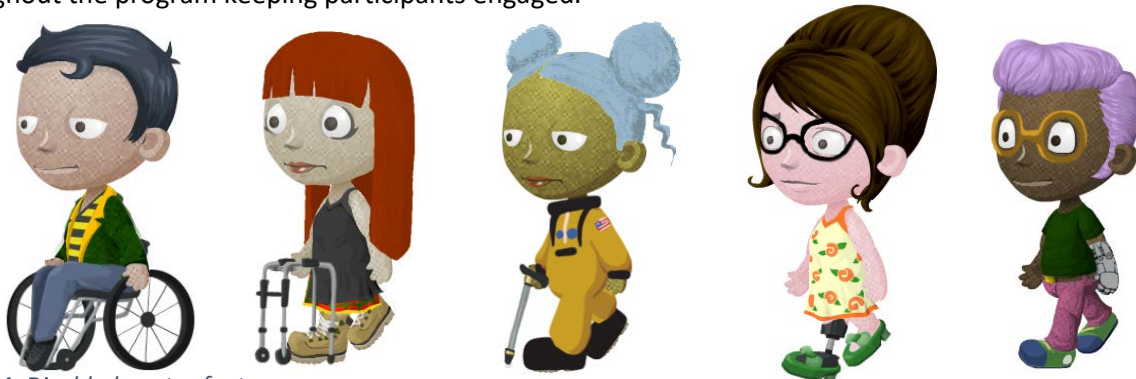

Figure 4: Disabled avatar features

Challenges

Challenges are an integral part of our program as they introduce participants to new reading materials and activities that keep them active within their communities and library all summer. It also helps reluctant or struggling readers, and prereaders earn points outside of reading, making the 1,000-point goal achievable for all. This year library staff and partners, such as the Maricopa County Public Health office and City of Mesa's Environmental and Sustainability Department, created 222 challenges with a total of 52,569 completions. This is 6,000 more completions than last year!

Top Completed Challenges

Challenges	Created by	Description	Participant completions
The Summer Reading Program Challenge	MCLD Admin	Have you seen everything the Summer Reading Program has to offer? There is always something new to discover!	5,682
All Together Now Starts with You	MCLD- Gila Bend library	Complete two self-care tasks for bonus points and a badge.	3,856
Milestone Challenge- Learning to Swim	MCLD Admin	Milestone moments and first times can be scary for little ones! Prepare for these occasions by reading books that spark conversations. Dive into these picture books about learning how to swim!	2,661
Tempe Shark Challenge	Tempe Public Library	Bite into these cool challenges and earn points for doing 3 of the 5!	2,128
Discover Dinosaurs	Phoenix Pubic Library- Desert Sage	Discover new things about these prehistoric creatures.	1,747
Form Your Team! Sports Challenge!	MCLD- Queen Creek Library	Let's get moving with these team building sports related books and activities!	1,581
Celebrate Mo Willems	MCLD- Georgia T. Lord Library	Mo Willems is a children's book author with over 50 published works. Take time to read some of his works, and then draw what you think would happen with his characters next!	1,491
Tempe Princess Challenge	Tempe Public Library	Complete 3 princess tasks to earn this fun badge and extra points	1,336
Self Care Bingo	MCLD- Queen Creek Library	Self Care is important! See if you can get a BINGO by completing 5 of these tasks.	1,215
Tempe Mermaid Challenge	Tempe Public Library	Complete 3 mermaid tasks for this fun badge and extra points	1,210

Figure 5: Top 10 Challenges

Community Experiences

A community experience is a special summer reading event at a partner organization or a feature created in partnership with an outside organization. They provide participants with experiential knowledge, a key component of literacy and build community by drawing attention to local organizations and cultural institutions throughout the valley. Staff from participating libraries were tasked with creating at least one Community Experience per system; most collaborated with many more partners. Together, they created experiences and secret codes that summer reading participants redeemed for a digital badge and points. Staff created 174 Community Experiences that were visited over 10,000 times, a huge jump from last year's 98 experiences and 6,400 visits. Temperatures were very hot this summer, which accounts for our most visited experiences being inside and mostly library related!

Top visited Community Experiences

Experience	Location	Description	Participants
Salt River Aquatics: Summer Kick Off	Salt River Tribal community	Come and enjoy a community pool party at Lehi Aquatics Center to celebrate the start of the summer season! Free pizza, popcorn, and drinks will be provided!	887
Rotating Art Exhibit	Gilbert	Stop by the art exhibit in the lobby of the Southeast Regional Library to earn a secret code!	690
QC Water Tower	Queen Creek	Come visit the "Water Use It Wisely" water tower located inside the QC library. Learn interesting and vital facts on how to use water wisely!	608
Friends of Gilbert Libraries	Gilbert	Visit the Friends of the Gilbert Libraries in the lobby of the Southeast Regional Library to find some great books, help support the library, and get a secret code!	482
Queen Creek- Friends of the Library	Queen Creek	The Queen Creek Branch-Friends of the Library are here to service your community! Friends of the Library are non-profit, volunteer-run community groups that provide vital support to the libraries	479
Scavenger Hunt July	Goodyear	Search the 'treehouse' for our hidden images to complete the scavenger hunt!	415
Salt River Aquatics: Dive in Movie Night	Salt River Tribal community	Join us every Wednesday for a dive-in movie night! Come out for a night of swimming while watching some of your favorite movies.	366
Nature Center at the White Tank Mountain Regional Park	Waddell	Come and visit the Nature Center at the White Tank Mountain Regional Park. It offers maps, trail information, annual passes, animal displays and souvenirs.	346
Phoenix Zoo	Phoenix	Visit the Phoenix Zoo and cross the turtle bridge to find the secret code for 25 points and a badge!	290
Scavenger Hunt June	Goodyear	Search the 'treehouse' for our hidden images to complete the scavenger hunt!	223

Figure 6: Top 10 Visited Community Experiences

Streaming and In Person Events

Moving from providing new streaming events weekly to every two weeks has helped us gain traction when promoting these events as well as getting more eyes on each video. Every two weeks 4 new programs, 3 English and 1 Spanish, became available to all summer reading participants. American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for two programs were also available, each ran for one month. Each streaming event included a secret code that participants could enter to earn extra points and a badge for viewing. These 17[2] events received 14,962 views; our most viewed events continue to be family events and fall within the first month of the program. Survey respondents specifically called out the Phoenix Zoo, Puppy Pals and Happy Birds as some of the favorite events from the summer.

2023 Most Viewed Streaming Events

All Together Now at the Phoenix Zoo
Puppy Pals
American Sign Language: Sonoran Desert Museum
An Amazing Parrot Show-Happy Birds
Honey Bee Painting

Figure 7: ASL: Sonoran Desert Museum event

Figure 8: Honey Bee Painting

Figure 9: An Amazing Parrot Show

[2] This year we had one performer cancel, so there was one week where we only had 2 English events.

Libraries are fully back to offering in person programming and most took advantage of having MCLD pay for one youth, teen and adult event. Some libraries elected to order a kit in lieu of program. This is an opportunity for libraries to bring in performers to draw larger crowds and unique learning experiences. These events are connected to the online program through earning a secret code and digital badge for attending. The kit options include both consumables for things like craft programming or items to keep and use for programming throughout the year.

2023 Top In-Person Events

Wildman Phil's Wild World Safari

Around the World with Jungle Jill & Friends

Purvi Shah's Temporary Henna Body Art Workshop

Talewise Science Heroes: Saving Earth Together

Taiko Drumming: All Together Now

Top Kit

Hunt a Killer-Mystery Boxes

Figure 10: Nancy Drew Mystery at magnolia Gardens

Figure 11: Taiko Drumming at Guadalupe Library

Figure 13: Around the World with Jungle Jill and Friends at Georgia T. Lord Library

Figure 12: Henna at Litchfield Park

Sponsors and Incentives

Outside organizations support the reading program by donating incentives our participants earn as they reach point milestones or win drawings. Peter Piper Pizza, Raising Cane's and Rubio's Coastal Grill donated free food coupons for 500-point achievers. Coordinated through the Arizona State Library, Arizona State Parks & Trails donated one-day park passes for 750-point achievers while the Phoenix Mercury provided up to four (4) free tickets to one regular season game June-August. The Arizona State Parks pass and Phoenix Mercury tickets continue to be the prizes most often mention in the survey by respondents. For 1,000-point achievers, Childsplay Theatre donated vouchers for two tickets to each participating library and one grand prize basket that included books, swag and a family four pack of tickets.

MCLD purchased kids prize bundles from Musical Instrument Museum as additional drawing prizes for all systems. This bundle included age appropriate activities and a musical instrument drawing book. Each system also partners with organizations within their communities to provide additional milestone and drawing prizes for all ages.

MCLD participants of all ages who log at least 140 points a week were entered into our weekly drawings: pre-readers, kids, teens, and adults could win a Musical Instrument Museum bundle each week. Kids and teens had the chance to win a 4 pack of tickets to Hurricane Harbor by reaching 1,000 points.

Figure 14: Summer Reading Sponsor Logos

Free Book Incentive

The Summer Reading Program offers participants who achieve 1,000 points a free book of their choice from over 150 titles. These choices include board books, fiction and non-fiction, activity books, manga/ graphic novels for all ages and classic titles like *The Fall of the House of Usher* and *Matilda.* 72% of achievers ordered a book totaling about 29,000 prize books. Participants also have the option to donate their prize books to a child enrolled in a Head Start classroom, through our continued partnership with Maricopa County Human Services Department; 4% of achievers opted to donate, totaling 1,620 books donated ensuring every child enrolled received a book. Our goal each year is to help build home libraries, important for providing access to reading material which builds positive reading habits; 76% of our achievers elected to build their own library or donate to a child's.

In anticipation of unexpected issues MCLD purchased a small amount of prize books for all participating libraries to have on hand for participants experiencing prize book issues. The extra books were useful again this year and several books were backordered indefinitely and some took several months to reach their participants.

Maricopa County continued to support the Durango Juvenile Detention Center's summer reading program with 91 participants and 29 achievers. They received a stack of prizes for the 500 and 750 point milestones and were sent a bulk order of books to choose from when they reached 1,000 points.

2023 Top Ordered Prize Book Titles

Kaleidoscope Coloring: Purrmaids, Octodogs, and More!

2023 Scholastic World Records

Sticker Puzzles for Creative Kids- Adventures in Wonderland

How to Draw Inky Wonderlands: Create and Color Your Own Magical Adventure

Brain Candy: Seriously Sweet Facts to Satisfy Your Curiosity

Attack of the Underwear Dragon

Mad Libs Super Summer Activity Book

Sonic the Hedgehog the Official Coloring Book

Art2-D2's Guide to Folding and Doodling

Extreme Wordle Challenge: 500 Puzzles to Do Anywhere, Anytime

Top Bilingual/Spanish: *El Don De Una Familia/ The Gift of Family*

Figure 15: Top Ordered Prize Books

Public Surveys

We invite participants to complete a survey about their experience with the Summer Reading Program to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of our program as well as provide information to the Arizona State Library. 3,784 surveys were completed: 616 kids, 537 teens, 1,894 adults and 737 parents/caregivers taking it on behalf of their child.

Typically, the survey is shared through an in-game message to those who reach 1,000 points. But this year we were interested in capturing additional information about why our participants do or do not reach the end so it was made available to all participants on the main dashboard a couple of weeks before the end of the program. A printable version of the survey was also made available early to libraries whose communities prefer to take it on paper. Although 98 % of respondents did finish, those who did not cited reading/learning disabilities in their children, reluctancy to read and starting late in the summer as reasons they were not able to reach 1,000 points. We will look to create some strategies next year to reach those who struggle to reach their goals and continue to capture this information in next year's survey.

The survey and staff feedback also revealed that fewer participants are getting signed up for the program at their library, opting to sign up at home. This accounts for some of the difficulty respondents reported in signing up as a family.

Survey results include the following:

- 82% of respondents reported they or their child learned something new from what they read or experienced
- 85% of respondents reported they or their child reads more
- 80% of respondents reported they or their child enjoys reading more

- 85% of respondents reported they or their child use the library resources more often

- 94% of respondents reported they or their child maintained or increased their reading skills

- 91% of respondents have a library card

- 98% of respondents finished the program

- 99% of respondents plan to participate next year

Summary

The 2023 Summer Reading Program surpassed expectations growing registration by 6,640 participants while increasing our achievement rate to 46.5%. We sustained engagement throughout the summer with our community reading goal displayed on the dashboard, improved communication around prizes and deadlines, increased number of challenges and community experiences, and introduced new inclusive avatar pieces.

We saw an unprecedented amount of adult participation this year with adults accounting for 70% of our growth, and a total of 27,252 adult participants; the highest it has been since we started tracking this statistic in 2015. This growth was reflected in our surveys where adults expressed the interest for more challenges, streaming events and prizes created for adults. As we look to next year improvements made will keep these participants in mind.

In addition to improving the Summer Reading Program for adults, plans for 2024 include: improvements around home registration and increased support for reluctant or struggling readers. We will look to adapt the program to better fit the user habits and trends; with the goal to improve user experience around registration and strategize ways to get those who need it most to achiever status.

Acknowledgments

The Summer Reading Program is made possible through the collaborative efforts of Maricopa County Library District staff, participating libraries, and community partners. We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for making the 2023 program a success.

Maricopa County Library District

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Participating Libraries

Avondale Public Library
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Wendy Corbett

Buckeye Public Library
Peter Grant
Janene Van Leeuwen

Chandler Public Library
Jean Reynolds
Thuan Nguyen

Desert Foothills
Sierra Litman

Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Tribal Library
Jacquelyn McCalvin
Jolene Smith
Tina Austin

Glendale Public Library
Erin Garred
Natalie Menges

Luke Air Force Base
Jennifer Crowell
Leanne McDermott

Maricopa County Durango Juvenile Detention Center
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Amy Otto
Joni Scoffield

Peoria Public Library
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Phoenix Public Library
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Charles Raybourn
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Jenny Lundin

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Tempe Public Library
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Tolleson Public Library
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Youngtown Public Library
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Wickenburg Public Library
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Maricopa County Parks and Recreation
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Arizona State Parks & Trails
Ken "Gecko" Sliwa

Childsplay Theatre Co.
Steve Martin
Averi Gutierrez
Jodie Weiss

Peter Piper Pizza
Lee Rosenthal

Phoenix Mercury
Vince Kozar
Josh McMann

Raising Cane's
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Maggie Agrela

Expect More AZ
Read on Arizona
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