


October 2008

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Recommended Citation

(2008) "Public Libraries 'Just Buggy' for 2008 Summer Reading Program," *Georgia Library Quarterly*: Vol. 45 : Iss. 3 , Article 13.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/glq/vol45/iss3/13>

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Public libraries 'just buggy' for 2008 Summer Reading Program

The air was heating up and school was letting out. Soon thousands of excited children and teens would be making their way into Georgia's public libraries. Librarians across the state were gearing up for the 2008 Summer Reading Program, "Catch the Reading Bug."

Here are some highlights from across Georgia's public libraries:

The Worth County Library System (WCLS) had a wonderful goal and met it. The staff wanted to increase teen participation, and they did — by 94 percent! Leigh Wiley, director of WCLS, commented on how important it is for libraries to get out and go to the public schools to talk about the program. By visiting the lunch periods of local middle schools and handing out program calendars, WCLS was able to have such a successful summer.

WCLS really caught the reading bug by hosting worm races for younger children. The system also hosted Georgia Southern's Center for Wildlife Education program. Children and parents had a great time at these and other programs this summer.

The Houston County Public Library System (HOUPL) added a new component to its Summer Reading Program: teens. Teens earned book bucks for reading. They saved their book bucks over the summer to use at the Teen Silent Auction. Teens placed bids on several different prizes, such as iPod Shuffle, prepaid cell phone, certificates for movie admissions and Blockbuster gift cards, to name a few. More than 320 teens participated in this first year. HOUPL librarians were overwhelmed with the turnout and are already thinking of how they will top the program next year.

The Southwest Georgia Regional Library System (SWGRLS) offered programs each Tuesday and Thursday in the month of June. One of the coolest programs they held was Didgeridoo Down Under.



The program centered on Australian culture, wildlife and a "didg." Participants were lucky enough to learn how to play their own didgeridoos. More than 640 patrons came to the SWGRLS to see Okefenokee Joe for his program, "Earth Day is



As part of the 2008 Summer Reading Program, the Worth County Library served "cups of worms" for a snack after holding a worm race. "The snack consisted of chocolate ice cream, crushed Oreo cookies and gummy worms," said Library Director Leigh Wiley. "And, believe it or not, all the kids wanted to take home the pond worms that they used in the races."

Everyday." Okefenokee Joe brought live snakes that have the freedom to crawl all over tables in the library! Needless to say, there was a lot of squirming by program attendants.

As in the Worth County Library System, Taryn Brown of SWGRLS visited local elementary schools to promote Summer Reading. She and a staff member performed skits for children and school staff to get them excited about the summer's events.

An innovative approach captured many local teens for Chattahoochee Valley Regional Libraries' Summer Reading Program. Brijin Boddy, head of the system's teen department, said Chattahoochee did its entire teen program online this year. "Our goal was to try and reach beyond those teens who walk in the library's doors," Boddy reported. She said it was an interesting experience.

While the number of teens who signed up was lower, the number of teens completing the program was higher. Boddy calls the experience a success.

Georgia's public librarians can rest assured that they have once again successfully enticed children, teens and parents with the Summer Reading Program. ►►