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Bennett to present at conference following success of Lakeland teen programs

Paula Bennett, Manager of the Miller Lakeland Library in Lakeland, Ga., was chosen by the Director of Children's Services of the Georgia Public Library Service to present to a group of children's and youth librarians at the annual teen conference in Warner Robins this month. Bennett was chosen to present at the teen conference because of the success of her teen program at the library, known as LTAC (Library Teen Advisory Council). She produces a monthly teen newsletter that tracks the success and community involvement that her teen group participates in. "It is a great honor to be asked, because of all the hard work that I have put in and all of the success our teen program has had," says Bennett.



The LTAC teen group with Bennett (third from left in back).

LTAC has been at the forefront of many community outreach events such as the annual Kick Butts Day events, the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, the annual Lighting of Lakeland Christmas Parade and other events that support the community and promote awareness. LTAC won an advocacy award for outstanding volunteer service in tobacco use prevention and was chosen to design a billboard for tobacco prevention for the American Cancer Society. LTAC also sponsors the annual Kick Butts Day events in Lanier County for tobacco prevention awareness. Kick Butts Day 2007 will be the third year that LTAC has organized the event. Additionally, LTAC participates in the annual Domestic Violence Week activities and the annual Red Ribbon Week campaign in Lanier County every year.

Bennett created LTAC as a way to highlight the positive aspects of teens and help them become more responsible young adults, while teaching them how to make an impact on the community. Part of their community outreach is in the school system where LTAC members read to elementary school classrooms as part of the annual Dr. Seuss birthday celebration, called Readers Are Leaders. Their latest school outreach endeavor included participating in the community Renaissance Parade and Pep Rally, held to recognize students for outstanding behavior and achievements.

The teens have been recognized as volunteers within the library system. Last year, they implemented a new leg of the program: a mentoring program, known as M&Ms (Mentors & Mentees). The program consists of pairing seasoned LTAC members with up-and-coming sixth graders. The sixth graders "shadow" their mentor throughout the year and are then eligible to become official LTAC members. This program has seen much success already and is on its way for even more.

Bennett has previously received the Lakeland-Lanier County Chamber of Commerce Achievement Award in recognition of her vision and devotion toward the development of youth, the enhancement of their literary experience, and their service as community volunteers. She was also chosen as a Leadership Lanier 2006 participant because of her work with LTAC and her community involvement. For more information on Miller Lakeland Library's LTAC teen program, call (229) 482-2904 or visit LTAC's website at www.myspace.com/teens_rock_ltac. ▶▶



LTAC members read books to elementary schools during Dr. Seuss' birthday celebration.



Members of LTAC participate in an event to help spread awareness of domestic violence.