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The positive power of partnerships

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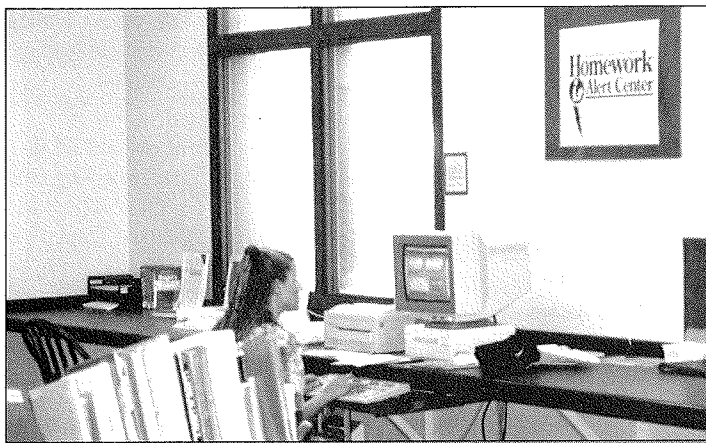
Cookies and Collaboration in Corvallis

*Kim Thompson
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How can you begin the process of collaboration between a school district and a public library? JUST DO IT! The Nike slogan is overused, but remains sage advice. We all know how difficult it is, though, to actually take the first step and begin whether it is jogging or forming partnerships. This is how we began in Corvallis.

The foundation for our collaboration is the professional relationship established by the superintendent of schools and the director of the public library. This association, built on trust and mutual respect, created a vision that inspires us to provide better library service for our students and families.

The "Yes for Kids" county-wide effort to coordinate agencies serving children and families further expanded the



A student completes a homework assignment using the Homework Alert Center at Corvallis-Benton County Public Library.

dialogue. It became increasingly clear that we needed each other to maximize the limited resources of time and money.

When an LSCA grant provided funding for a school-library liaison, the partnership broadened. By reaching out to the

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The Positive Power of Partnerships

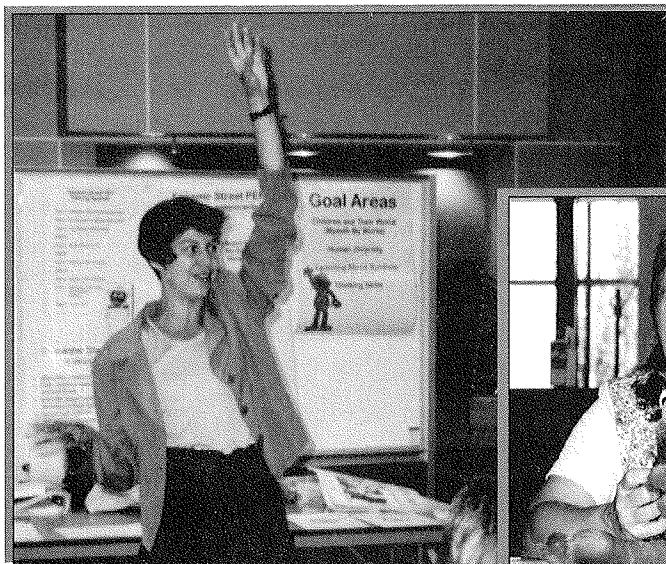
*by Nancy Spaulding
Head of Youth Services,
Cedar Mill Community Library*

Many public libraries try to serve children who spend a large part of their time in home care or daycare centers. One of the most effective steps libraries can take to serve these children is to build partnerships with the agencies that serve care providers. For several years now, the youth services librarians at Washington County's public libraries and the staff of West Tuality Child Care Services have shared information and expertise and supported each other's programs.

West Tuality Child Care Services is a United Way agency that maintains a child care resource and referral service in Washington County. West Tuality supports child care providers through information resources, a newsletter, on-site visits, and continuing education opportunities. The libraries support West Tuality Child Care Services by distributing its brochures on choosing child care and by distributing information that encourages professional growth among care providers. Some libraries maintain a Child Care Notebook and include West Tuality materials. West

Tuality supports the library programs by distributing lists of library resources for children, parents, and care professionals. West Tuality also includes information about the libraries' Summer Reading Program in an issue of its

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Above: OPB's Jennifer Jordan teaches a workshop on Sesame Street's curriculum goals.
Inset: Childcare provider Dallas Rodriguez explains the child-like qualities of Elmo.

Partnerships

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newsletter each year.

Several years ago, the Youth Services Committee of Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) began long range planning for library outreach to children in care and their providers. During 1994, the cooperative and West Tuality worked together to complete a needs assessment survey. Librarians and West Tuality staff members prepared the survey. West Tuality provided mailing addresses, and the cooperative provided printing, postage, and the final compilation and reporting of results. More than 800 providers received the survey, and more than a third returned them. The information gathered is helping the libraries plan individual and collective outreach services.

Another way the two organizations work cooperatively is by supporting each other's grant-writing efforts. Several librarians wrote letters of support for a recent grant West Tuality received to encourage reading activities in home-care environments. The public libraries in Cedar Mill, Hillsboro, and Tigard collaborated on a Library Services and Construction Act grant to strengthen their collections of professional support materials, particularly in video format. The West Tuality staff recommended many specific titles to be purchased with grant money.

When West Tuality looked for a way to make its collection of training and informational videos more easily available to the providers it serves, it decided to place them in a library in the cooperative. These videos are now available for loan throughout the county.

Combined efforts to provide continuing education for child care providers have taken several forms. Some libraries provide space for West Tuality-sponsored events. Library staff members present storytelling ideas or shared library resources in other programs. Sesame Street PEP Training has been the most exciting co-sponsored program to date. This half-day participatory program trained providers how to use and expand upon Sesame Street's curriculum goals. Jennifer Jordan, Early Childhood Specialist at Oregon Public Broadcasting, presented the workshop, which was held at three county-library locations during the summer of 1995. The libraries provided on-site publicity, a meeting room, coffee, muffins, and information about library services. West Tuality provided publicity, certification credits, and scholarships for some individuals. The Sesame Street PEP participants received not only hours of enjoyable training, but also a video, resource notebook, Big Bird poster, and many ideas to put into use immediately.

Librarians and the agency professionals who support child care providers use each other's strengths. They promote each other's programs, share resources and expertise, and most importantly, catch each other's enthusiasm for serving care providers and children in care. □

Divine Moments

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whelmed by my own emotions at the sight of a couple of high school kids joking around and jostling each other as they walked home from school. Just a couple of jokers, like Mose and Rico, showing me glints off the diamond.

I also wrote that book because I practically choke up whenever I see fathers and sons who actually care about each other. I wanted to magnify that bond, because most certainly I missed that in my life. Through Tomi and his father, and Billy Davis and his, I felt what it was like. And that was pretty dang good, too.

Divine moments.

We can't ask for them. We can't look for them. We can't force them to happen. Because they aren't ours. They belong to the universe. They come when they come.

But when they do come they bring a special magic into our lives and into our stories. And isn't that what we're all hoping to do, bring a little magic into the lives of young people? A little happiness? A little hope?

This is what I think: every kid ought to see a glint or two off his own diamond—nice kids, wandering kids, lost kids, frightening kids. And it would be great if I could show them how to do that. But I can't. And anyway it's not my job. It's far too personal. It has to be done alone.

But what I can do is share what I feel about this mystery called Life by writing the best I can about the things that are important to me.

If I didn't do at least that much I'd be a selfish fool. Arrogance would be my life. Ignorance would be my legacy.

But that's not acceptable.

Not acceptable at all. □

This speech was delivered by Graham Salisbury at the Oregon Library Association Conference, in Portland, Oregon; April, 1995. This essay also appeared in the 1995 Spring/Summer issue of SIGNAL Journal, a publication of the International Reading Association.