

July 2014

Juvenile Justice Outreach Library Program

Naomi Angier
Multnomah County Library

Recommended Citation

Angier, N. (2014). Juvenile Justice Outreach Library Program. *OLA Quarterly*, 9(3), 15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1653>

Juvenile Justice Outreach Library Program

by Naomi Angier
Librarian
Multnomah County Library

At the Multnomah County Library system, we run a program called the Juvenile Justice Outreach library program. It is a full time library program at the Donald E. Long Detention Center—a county facility that serves the tri-county metro area. Donald E. Long houses about 100 incarcerated youth ages 12 to 18. The library program includes a full-time librarian who purchases new recreational paperbacks for a dedicated book collection for the youth at the Donald E. Long Detention Center. These books reflect the life-styles, personal interests and reading levels of the youth. They are housed in the multi-purpose room at the Juvenile Detention Center. The librarian takes a large book truck of books to each living unit on a weekly basis where the youth can check out up to five books each. She advises the youth on which books would match their reading tastes and level and asks for suggestions for other future purchases.

In addition to the weekly check-out times, the librarian also visits each classroom at the Donald E. Long School (since the youth are school age, they have school from 9:00 to 3:00 each school day). These visits are either book talks (telling the youth about certain books) or book discussion groups (we read short stories and discuss them).

The library program also provides special guests. These guests have included nationally known authors. This past year, Ernest Gaines came to the detention center as part of the system wide library program "Everybody Reads." The book everybody read was his *A lesson before Dying*. The librarian and the teachers read the entire books to the youth so that they were ready for Ernest Gaines visit and were able to ask informed questions. The year before that, Luis Rodriguez came to the Donald E. Long Detention Center on an American Library Association "ALIVE" grant. His book *Always Running: la vida loca gang days in LA* was very relevant to the youth. He gave a very inspirational talk on being

in gangs and getting out of that life-style.

Every summer, we take the Summer Reading Program into the detention center. Since the youth are limited as to what is allowed in their rooms, we give them bookmarks and new magazines as prizes.

The Juvenile Justice Outreach program started as a Library Services and Technology Act federal grant administered through the Oregon State Library to bring library services to the Multnomah County Juvenile Detention Home. Until the start of the grant, library services consisted of old, discarded paperbacks that were donated to the detention center.

Now both the Community Justice Department and Multnomah County Library fund the Juvenile Justice Outreach program.

On a personal level, I love this job. I have been a school librarian, a children's public librarian and the teen specialist for the library system. This is my most gratifying job because these are teens who can really expand their world through reading. 

