

Bentonville Report

The American Dream Starts @ your library



In Partnership —

The American Library Association
Dollar General Literacy Foundation

BPL Focus: Family Literacy

Bentonville Public Library was awarded an American Dream Starts @ your library grant in 2013. This was the second round of AD funding for BPL.

- The **\$10,000 grant** supported **family literacy**, specifically English Language Learner families in our community.
- Families learn and grow together! Many **new materials** were **purchased** for all reading levels including children, families, teens and adults.

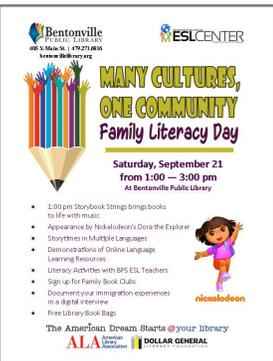


- Types of materials include bilingual books, American history and government, citizenship resources, high-interest / low-level series & more!
- All materials purchased through the grant include special **bookplates** with logos recognizing the project and grantors.
- To generate interest in materials, **special events** and **programs** were hosted at the library to promote diversity and lifelong long learning.

Special Events Promote Literacy

Family Literacy Days were offered partnering with the ESL Department from the Bentonville Public Schools. Dig Into Reading, Many Cultures, One Community and World of Water were three distinct family literacy events hosted at Bentonville Public Library.

All three programs celebrated literacy, community and cultural diversity through music, special storytimes and fun activities. New grant-funded materials were displayed and demonstrations of Little Pim and Mango Languages were featured at exhibit tables during the events.



Dig Into Reading was held May 2013 and attended by 115 people. It served as the launch for our Summer Reading Program for all ages.

Many Cultures, One Community was held September 2013 and attended by 451 people. Theatrical readings were accompanied by music and Dora the Explorer made an appearance. The school district and community groups set up informational booths throughout the Library.

World of Water was held April 2014 and attended by 272 people. A Lamvong folk dance presentation celebrated the Lao and Thai New Years. The library's rain garden and water themed storytimes provided for educational fun.

Additional programs featured family literacy during the American Dream grant cycle.

- **Chinese New Year** was held February 2013 and February 2014; these programs were attended by 500 people. A traditional Chinese Lion dance celebrated the year of the snake and the year of the horse. Bilingual storytimes and Chinese themed crafts accompanied the events.
- **Black History Month** was held February 2013 and attended by 200 people. In addition to African dancers, special storytime and craft offerings were presented by community groups.
- **Literacy Outreach** to local public schools during "parent nights" throughout the grant cycle were attended by 450 people. Participants were encouraged to sign up for library cards in order to take full advantage of BPL's literacy resources.



American Dream Stories

American Dream stories were shared through digital interviews capturing immigration experiences. A member of BPL's Teen Advisory Board sought information about the interviewee's cultural background and experiences in America. The stories also share ways to preserve language, culture and family history while celebrating a new life in the United States.

Maria Reynoso moved to Bentonville from Peru several years ago. She began her immersion into the local community through volunteering at the library; she works as a part-time clerk at BPL. Maria was naturalized in April 2014. She states "we are all the same (people), so the language is the most noticeable difference." In America, "we have freedom..., sometimes in our countries, we do not know what is going to happen. And we are grateful that you guys open your arms to everybody. We enjoy that and we respect that. I feel good here; I feel at home."



Octavio Sanchez relocated to Bentonville in 1997 from Mexico; he was naturalized in May 2006. Octavio serves on the Library Advisory Board and is an active participant in the local community. "Being an American is very important for me because it is being part of a society that was founded on a model that includes the responsibility of the citizens. I am absolutely satisfied with the foundations of the American system. The American form of government ... makes me happy ... knowing that anybody can go to the polls ... and be part of it and have an influence on the decisions of the country. This is something I did not have in Mexico; the decisions were made a different way. The ability to participate in the political process is something I want everybody to understand and take advantage of... for the benefit of themselves and the future generations."

Fred Henry is originally from France and is a grassroots local business entrepreneur. He and his American wife bring the flavor of his country to Bentonville through delicious crepes. Fred moved to our community in 2005 and was naturalized in January 2013. "I am very proud to be American. It means a lot to me. I think it's a country that is reinventing itself all the time; it is a country that is the most adaptable, ever. It is a big difference, because I come from a country that relies on its past. It's harder for us ... there is more resistance (to change). The process of becoming an American was very meaningful." He states that one challenge for his family is that "it's very hard to pass on your language to your kids, but they are getting older and beginning to show more interest in French."

American Dream stories are available for viewing on BPL's website at www.bentonvillelibrary.org or the 'Bentonville Library Friends & Foundation' youtube channel.

Community Partners

- Bentonville Public Schools, ESL Center*
- BPL Teen Advisory Board
- City of Bentonville
- More than 100 Community Volunteers
- Asian American Living
- Bentonville High School Drama Students
- Bentonville Library Foundation
- Ebony Kids of NW Arkansas
- Illinois River Watershed Partnership
- Literacy Council of Benton County
- Nickelodeon
- Northwest Arkansas Community College
- Northwest Arkansas Area Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.
- University of Arkansas Department of Diversity

Grant Breakdown

- \$ 5,000 for Collection Materials
- \$ 3,000 for Library Programs
- \$ 2,000 for Marketing
- \$10,000 Grant Funds Expended
- \$16,500 In-Kind Contributed from BPL

*Bentonville Public Schools ESL Department serves 1,000 students whose families speak 49 languages from 39 different countries. This key partnership offered BPL exposure in order to bring these families into the public library and to become familiar with our many available literacy resources.

Telling Our Story – Promotions & Marketing

Bentonville Public Library used standard marketing techniques to reach varied audiences about the grant, special events and family literacy:

- Media releases to 25+ local print, TV and radio contacts
- Print campaign within the Library
- Website, eNewsletter & Social Media announcements
- Distribution of 1,000+ BPL tote bags featuring American Dream logo
- BPL's 2013 Annual Report featured our American Dream grant; it was distributed to key stakeholders, including the Bentonville City Council and the Arkansas State Library.



The spring 2014 issue of the Arkansas Library Association's *Arkansas Libraries* journal featured a story and photographs about BPL's American Dream success. The article was written by Sue Ann Pekel, BPL Children's Librarian and 2013 American Dream grant coordinator. Pekel encouraged community partnerships while highlighting the importance of family literacy. Special recognition was given to the American Dream campaign, the American Library Association and the Dollar General Literacy Foundation.

The American Dream Starts @ your library

Bentonville Public Library received a \$5,000 grant award in 2010 to focus on purchasing content, revitalizing a limited Literacy Collection for adults. BPL hosted a United States Naturalization Ceremony, our premiere event launching our grant initiative.

The public library is the perfect setting for a celebration of diversity, inclusiveness and civic engagement. On Friday, May 14, 2010, 30 participants from 14 countries took the Oath of Allegiance in the library's community room. Countries represented: *Canada, China, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Iran, Laos, Mexico, Nicaragua, Philippines, Somalia, Syria and Vietnam.* Our day at BPL was a shining example many American Dreams – hope, faith and determination.



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The Naturalization Ceremony at Bentonville Library was amazing. It was the realization of one dream and the beginning of another dream – to continue our education and improve ourselves. We are excited to vote! This is our American Dream! We are a part of the Land of Opportunity. We are Citizens of the Greatest Nation on Earth!

— Francisco & Ingrid Maldonado

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Program Partners

The American
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DOLLAR GENERAL
LITERACY FOUNDATION

Bentonville
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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