

# BRIGHT SPOT<sup>FOR READING</sup>

Creating a  
Bright Spot  
for Teens  
in Clubs



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
OF AMERICA

Walmart 



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OF AMERICA**

## **Creating a Bright Spot for Teens in Clubs**

Made Possible By  
Walmart Foundation



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Boys & Girls Clubs of America partnered with the Walmart Foundation to implement the Bright Spot for Reading Initiative for Adolescent Readers, an initiative to engage adolescents in reading and literacy activities. Thanks to funding from the Walmart Foundation, local Boys & Girls Clubs created reading-rich environments and provided literacy programming to encourage adolescents to read more and develop a more positive attitude toward reading.

This guide is the result of the following Clubs' hard work and effort to instill in youth the desire to become life-long learners through their discovery of the joy of reading, in a place to call their own.

Boys & Girls Club of Bethalto, Ill.  
Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro, Inc., Vt.  
Boys & Girls Club of Cape Cod, Mass.  
Boys & Girls Club of Central Arkansas, Dalton Whetstone Boys & Girls Club  
Boys & Girls Club of Clifton, N.J.  
Boys & Girls Club of Dayton, Ohio, Dayton Boys & Girls Club West,  
Boys & Girls Club of El Paso, Texas  
Boys & Girls Club of Elgin, Ill.  
Boys & Girls Club of Farmington, N.M.  
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Flint, Mich.  
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Holyoke, Mass.  
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Kingsport, Tenn.  
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Nashua, N.H.  
Boys & Girls Club of Green Bay, Wis., Bruce W. Nagel Boys & Girls Club  
Boys & Girls Club of Henderson County/Hendersonville, N.C.  
Boys & Girls Club of Huntington County, Ind.  
Boys & Girls Club of Jackson County, Inc., Ga., Jefferson Unit  
Boys & Girls Club of Malibu, Calif.  
Boys & Girls Club of Martin County, Fla., Cole-Clark Hobe Sound Unit  
Boys & Girls Club of McAllen, Texas, Brand Unit  
Boys & Girls Club of Oshkosh, Wis., Boys & Girls Clubs of the Tri-County Area  
Boys & Girls Club of Pharr, Texas  
Boys & Girls Club of Redlands, Calif., Dennis Hansberger Clubhouse  
Boys & Girls Club of Saginaw County, Mich.  
Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley, N.H.  
Boys & Girls Club of Southeast Georgia, Elizabeth Correll Teen Center  
Boys & Girls Club of Stanton, Calif.  
Boys & Girls Club of Tahlequah, Okla., Tahlequah Junior High Unit  
Boys & Girls Club of the Monroe Area, Tenn., Vonore Unit  
Boys & Girls Club of the Ozarks, Mo.  
Boys & Girls Club of Trenton/Mercer County, N.J., David Anderson Unit  
Boys & Girls Club of Truckee Meadows, Nev.  
Boys & Girls Club of Venice, Calif.

- Boys & Girls Club of Whittier, Calif.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Ada County, Idaho, Meridian Boys & Girls Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Athens, Ga., Joel E. Smilow Clubhouse
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Bellevue, Wash., Ground Zero Teen Center Unit
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Black Hawk County, Iowa, Boys & Girls Club of Waterloo
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Buffalo, N.Y., Butler-Mitchell Clubhouse
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida, Universal Orlando Foundation Boys & Girls Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Chattanooga, Tenn., East Lake Unit
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester, Inc., Mass., The Colonel Daniel Marr Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester, Inc.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of East Central Alabama, Commissioners Park
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Edinburg Rio Grande Valley, Texas, Club 2020 El Tule
- Boys & Girls Clubs of El Camino Real, La., Martin Luther King Boys & Girls Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove, Calif., McGarvin Unit
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Garfield, N.J.
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- Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Kansas City, Mo., Leslie Unit
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Lee County, Ala., Auburn Unit
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater San Diego, Calif., National City Branch
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Scottsdale, Ariz., Lehi Branch
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Green Country, Okla.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Hall County, Ga., Teen Center
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford, Conn., Southwest Boys & Girls Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Indianapolis, Ind., LeGore Boys & Girls Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of King County, Wash., Southwest Branch
- Boys & Girls Clubs of La Habra, Calif.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Lincoln/Lancaster County, Inc., Neb., Boys & Girls Club of Lincoln Park Teen Center
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver, Colo., Denver Broncos Boys & Girls Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Phoenix, Ariz., I.G. Homes Boys & Girls Club
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- Boys & Girls Clubs of Pee Dee Area, S.C., Rick and Susan Goings Boys & Girls Club
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- Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma Valley, Calif., Maxwell Park
- Boys & Girls Clubs of South Central Texas, San Marcos Unit
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Virginia, Rosemont Unit
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, James & Lynelle Holden Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Syracuse, N.Y., East Fayette Boys & Girls Club
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay, Fla.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast, Miss., IP Center at North Bay

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Suncoast, Fla., Boys & Girls Club of Chi Chi Rodriguez Academy  
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities, Minn., Southside Village Boys & Girls Club  
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Upstate, S.C., Carver TEENS Supreme Center  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Wayne County Indiana, Richard E. Jeffers Unit  
Boys & Girls Clubs of West Central Missouri  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania, LaRosa Boys & Girls Club of McKeesport  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Whatcom County, Wash., Bellingham Unit  
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Cherokee Youth Center, N.C.  
Children's Aid Society, N.Y., CAS East Harlem Center Boys & Girls Club  
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Citrus Center Boys & Girls Club, Fla., George W. Jenkins Memorial Unit  
Community Boys & Girls Club, N.C.  
Eielson Air Force Base Youth Center, Alaska  
Grenville Baker Boys & Girls Club, N.Y.  
HELP Committee and Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line, Mont., Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line  
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Santa Fe Boys & Girls Club, N.M.  
Town of Walkill Boys & Girls Club, N.Y., Pine Bush  
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## Introduction

*“When we create conditions that support the development of children, they will learn.”<sup>1</sup>*

For more than a century, Boys & Girls Clubs have been committed to enabling America’s young people to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. In order for the youth we serve to have great futures, our Movement must make a commitment to have a greater impact on the young people who come through our doors. Our vision is to provide a world-class Club Experience that ensures success is within reach of every young person who walks through our doors, with all members on track to graduate from high school with a plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship, and living a healthy lifestyle.

A major part of this vision means providing youth with the tools needed to achieve academic success. To help our youth succeed academically, BGCA has created “Every Member, Every Year,” which is our strategy that aims to ensure all members progress to the next grade level on time, and graduate from high school prepared with a plan for the future. At the very foundation of this plan is providing youth with opportunities for “Academic Enrichment and School Engagement.” This is exactly where our new “Bright Spots” can help engage youth in reading activities, instilling in them a life-long desire to read and learn.

Despite technological advances in our ability to share the printed and spoken word through media such as e-books, smart phones, Twitter and Facebook, our state and national standardized test reports continue to give us concern about the literacy and competitiveness of our youth. However, the reading habits of adults are not exactly encouraging either. A report from *USA Today* states that “27 percent of adults in this country did not read a single book in 2007.”<sup>2</sup>

While not claiming that participating at the Club is the “one and only” contributing factor to a member’s achievement of academic success, it has been shown that particularly for teen members, attending Club at least 40 times a year increases the likelihood of high school graduation. Research has shown that youth perform better in school when they spend their non-school hours in fun, but academically challenging activities. “Students who read the most, read the best, achieve the most, and stay in school the longest.”<sup>3</sup>

Through the generosity of the Walmart Foundation, the Bright Spot for Reading Initiative afforded 100 participating Clubs an opportunity to engage adolescent members in reading activities to help them develop the cognitive skills needed to thrive in today’s competitive global society. In a Bright Spot for Reading, Clubs can create: (1) a place for tweens and teens to call their own; (2) a community of readers who share the joy of reading; (3) opportunities for members to discover the treasures provided by the local public library; (4) ways to discover that reading can be cool through online portals and

<sup>1</sup> James P. Comer, *Leave No Child Behind: Preparing Today’s Youth for Tomorrow’s World* (Yale University Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Kelly Gallagher, *Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It*, (Stenhouse Publishers, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Penguin Books, 2001, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.



other media tools; and (5) ultimately, critical tools to help members graduate on time from high school and prepare for a post-secondary career.

The success of BGCA's Movement-wide focus on ensuring that all members graduate on time with a plan for the future is contingent upon members' success (or failure) at literacy tasks. "Reading for pleasure" has been identified as one of the critical developmental assets essential for creating a commitment to learning.<sup>4</sup> Our partnership with the Walmart Foundation provides an excellent opportunity to show youth how reading can be enjoyable. This guide contains many best practices, derived from the Bright Spot pilot Clubs, for creating reading-rich environments for tweens and teens. The following examples will provide your Club with the tools and strategies needed to create your own Bright Spot for Reading so that you may nurture tweens and teens, and provide them with the essential foundation for how they learn – rather, *for how they learn to learn*.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter L. Benson, *All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents*, (2006).

## Creating a “Bright Spot” in Clubs

In “Making the Case for Advancing Literacy Skills,” the authors of Carnegie Corporation of New York’s Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy echo BGCA’s education philosophy in noting, “The out-of-school time community presents a unique opportunity to provide adolescent literacy development and enrichment that bridges the academic and social worlds of students.”<sup>5</sup>

In his book *Readicide: How Schools are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It*, Kelly Gallagher argues that American schools are actively (though unwittingly) furthering the decline of reading. Specifically, he contends that the standard instructional practices used in most schools are killing reading by: valuing the development of test-takers over the development of lifelong readers; mandating breadth over depth in instruction; requiring students to read difficult texts; drowning great books with sticky notes, double-entry journals, and marginalia; ignoring the importance of developing recreational reading; and losing sight of authentic instruction in the shadow of political pressures.

By following principles of youth development and making the process a community and social activity, our teen Club members are more likely to embrace life-long learning and reading for fun. “Engagement” is our strategy for exposing youth to the joys of leisure reading in out-of-school time. Our youth have coined the perfect word that lets adults know what matters to them. The Bright Spot for Reading is a place to “chillax.”

Our youth come away from the school day and a culture of standardized

testing that kills the love of reading, described by Kelly Gallagher as “readicide.” Gallagher warns us that the emphasis on testing results in school may preclude the development of life-long readers.<sup>6</sup> The Bright Spot for Reading is a critical respite for our youth. To ensure a sense of belonging, the best reading spaces that engaged our adolescent readers – particularly the reluctant readers – have involved significant input by our tween and teen members.

### Designing a Bright Spot for Reading

Boys & Girls Club staff understand that the design of the physical space of a Bright Spot for Reading must communicate “there is something happening here that will be fun.” Indeed, having the resources to create a dedicated reading space provided the opportunity for significant renovation in more than half of the Clubs. Being involved in the design of the space facilitated member ownership of the room and respect for the area. Many of the features

“We have been able to ‘step-up’ our library with more tween-/teen-appropriate and interesting books since receiving this grant. For the longest time, our library was full of reading materials geared toward younger kids, but [we] didn’t have as much available for our older members. It has shown that they are excited about reading now that we have books and magazines they can enjoy.”  
– Southwest Unit of Boys & Girls Club of King County

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Birr Moje and Nicole, “Making the Case for Advancing Literacy Skills,” *Adolescent Literacy Development in Out-of-School Time: A Practitioner’s Guidebook*, 2010 Final Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York’s Council on Advancing Literacy.

<sup>6</sup> Kelly Gallagher, *Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It*, (Stenhouse Publishers 2009).

of the Bright Spot for Reading were based on ideas from the Boys & Girls Club National Teen Advisory Council, as well as suggestions shared through the Boys & Girls Club online community, in addition to resources shared by BGCA's national staff.

Once the space was chosen, members, like those of the Town of Wallkill Boys & Girls Club, voted on choices: the color of paint; furniture and decor; background music and light sources; signage; wall art; posters of favorite celebrity sports figures, book characters (the *Twilight* series, especially), and other role models; and arrangements for refreshments. At the Boys & Girls Club of Central Arkansas, members made sure that they included colors and features that would uniquely appeal to boys and to girls. Clubs also used "Teen Town Hall Meetings" to gather input from other members. The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Gulf Coast made sure that members who were otherwise unlikely to choose the reading center (the reluctant readers) were a part of the design and decision-making process.

"Whether it's a book on billiards accompanying the pool table, books on creating Flash® games and video game careers calling to those usually drawn to the TV screen, or the books on Japanese culture and language for teens interested in anime and manga, there is a constant push making reading omnipresent. It makes it seem like a rather common activity, no more surprising than eating or sleeping (or texting)."- Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley member

One of the critical components of a Bright Spot for reading is building the reading collection. This may be based on a formal survey as recommended by the Boys & Girls Club of Souhegan Valley. Their survey solicited responses to genres of books such as classical literature, young adult series and self-help books. Club staff also maintained a suggestion box to regularly collect teen input. They also gathered recommendations for furniture to decorate the space, which included soft and movable pieces like bean bags, futons, beach chairs and large pillows, all of which could withstand teen abuse.



**The Bright Spot for Reading at the Eielson Air Force Base Youth Center**

Other Clubs, like the Challengers Boys & Girls Club, remained committed to the retention of teen members and therefore operated the Bright Spot for Reading in two areas. One area was designated inside the Teen Center for 13-18 year olds. The older teens requested a separate area to mark their distinction as the senior members of the Club. Moreover, they felt that there would be occasions where activities and reading material they were interested in would not be age appropriate for tween members.

Club staff welcomed their leadership and initiative. The tweens (11-13) chose their decorations based on favorite characters and stuffed animals.

The Cherokee Youth Center divided the teen members into four groups and asked them to draw a picture of their ideal reading space. They then voted on the one they liked best. The winner had La-Z-Boy® chairs, bean bags and a wide-screen television to watch movies that had been created from the books they were reading. They have stocked the area with everything by and about *Harry Potter* and the *Twilight* series.

### **Creative Programming Ideas to Encourage Reading**

BGCA's education philosophy envisions the whole Club as learning center by removing the division between learning and playing; finding high-yield learning opportunities in each Club activity; making all areas of the Club places for learning; making all staff members responsible for education programs; and linking new ideas to things children already know. Taking into account young people's developmental needs, Club activities operate within the context that learning must be engaging, relevant and fun.

The activities in Boys & Girls Clubs are designed to further literacy and commitment to academic success through activities designed to be interactive and fun. They are labeled "high yield" because they extend the cognitive skills that schools teach by providing opportunities to practice reading, writing, verbal communication, problem-solving and decision-making in real-world contexts.

High-yield activities are designed to provide youth with fun experiences that are hands-on, interactive and intentionally develop critical and other thinking skills. Sometimes described as "fun with a purpose," they help members gain new knowledge or skills or reinforce those learned in school; experience new ways to apply knowledge already gained; engage in creative expression; test their own solutions to real-world issues; and/or work in groups to achieve a goal.

Creative Club programming increased the time youth spent reading. Sports-themed books and reading materials played a large role in generating interest at some Clubs. At the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, interest in NBA player LeBron James' decision to move to a new team spurred the development of a book club for boys, in which members read *Sports Illustrated* and debated current events in sports. Additional reading selections for this book club included autobiographies of LeBron James and hip-hop mogul Jay-Z. The Denver Broncos Boys & Girls Club created an activity with their Team Sports Program called "Cooler Reading." The coach and players are invited to come to the Bright Spot to read a book relating to their sport.

The Denver Broncos Boys & Girls Club also used teen favorites, including identifying books that would appeal to each gender and using food as incentives, to encourage participation in the Bright Spot Initiative. Their teen planning committee designed gender-based reading clubs. Male members read *I Am Third* by Gale Sayers; the girls read *Orange Mint and Honey*, and got to meet the author, Carleen Brice. Their Bright

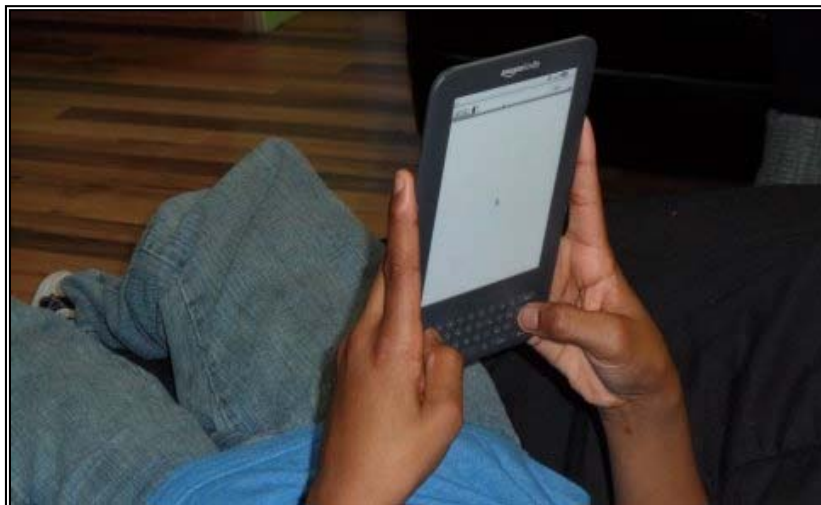
Spot participants were also motivated by reading recipes, and of course, trying them out. The Club discovered that the café décor and permission to munch and read were effective enticements, motivating reluctant readers to participate in the leisure reading activities.

The Boys & Girls Club of Oshkosh also skillfully capitalized on using existing Club programs as opportunities to make reading fun. Members created a “Teen Cuisine Cookbook” as a part of the Healthy Habits Initiative. They researched the food pyramid for healthy habits programs, chose healthy recipes, created the shopping list, cooked and ate their prepared meal. The activities incorporated reading, writing, learning healthy eating and living, as well as teamwork.

The activities of a drama club proved to be a boost for reading for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Nevada. They read and performed the play *Three Sideways Stories from Wayside School* in multiple performances. The preparation and experience significantly increased teen confidence in reading and their competence with the spoken word.

The success of Boys & Girls Clubs of Newport Co. shows how a reading-rich environment can open the opportunity for academic enrichment, school engagement and post-secondary careers: The staff used the teens’ interest in careers as entrepreneurs to provide reading material about marketing careers and creating business plans. The teens were particularly involved in researching art/silk screening, music production, video production and café/gallery management businesses.

Clubs have achieved tremendous success engaging youth in reading through creative programming by offering diverse reading topics, hosting book discussions, using Kindles (or other electronic readers) and audio books. At Boys & Girls Clubs of Wayne



County Indiana, the opportunity for members to review books online through [myclubmylife.com](http://myclubmylife.com) generated even more excitement about reading. Teens have also spent time at coffee houses and bookstores to emphasize reading as a leisure activity; while there, members observed adults choosing to spend their free time reading.

**Boys & Girls Clubs of Gordon, Murray, and Whitfield Counties member reading on a Kindle**

Other Clubs successfully integrated the Bright Spot initiative into existing teen-focused programming. One Clubs “SMART Teens” group chose relevant books to enhance their discussions about friends, body development, peer pressure and dating. As a part of the summer program component, the SMART Teens read *Dear John* and then saw the movie as a group when it was released in theatres. SMART Girls and Passport to Manhood groups chose topics and themes that interested them, generated book lists and reported in group discussions. Members earned points for books read and their names were posted and recognized on a bulletin board. Points earned members prizes and privileges such as passes for extra time in the computer lab, passes for eating lunch with the Teen Center staff or pizza parties.

Even more real-world applications are evident in the impact of leisure reading on staff. As one Club director reported, “So many new and exciting authors have emerged since the majority of us [staff] have completed high school. By having the staff read more relevant titles, like summer reading requirements, we are able to have really insightful conversations about the books.” The Club staff would readily agree with author Jim Trelease, who says, “When we try to interest children in reading, we’re in the sales business.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jim Trelease, *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Penguin Books, 2001, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.

## Reigniting the Love of Reading

Boys & Girls Club staff have shown tremendous creativity for engaging young people: podcasts, book reviews on myclubmylife.com, debates on current events, dramatic scene productions and use of technology such as the Kindle™ e-reader are just a few of the tools used to promote the value of reading.

Research indicates the more time a person spends reading, the better a reader she or he will become.

You never know when a member may discover their love of reading. For example, at the Challengers Boys & Girls Club in Los Angeles, a 13-year old female member who had struggled with behavior issues discovered a connection with the Club's Bright Spot, where she found that reading books calms her down.

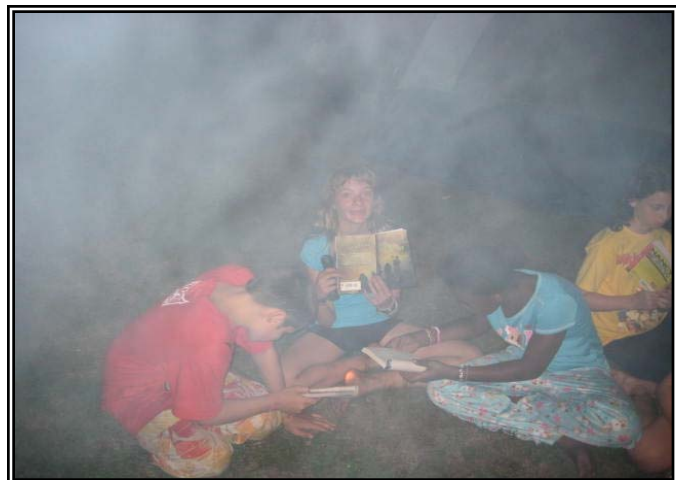
"While reading the book, *Ember* by Jeanne Duprau, I found myself unable to put the story down. I found that my excitement and engagement with this story encouraged our other teen members to read this story."  
– Brittany Hullinger, Education Coordinator, Boys & Girls Club of Newport County

Field trips, special events held at bookstores and libraries – even a reduced beverage rate at the local bookstore for the Boys & Girls Club of Jackson County, Inc. – have all contributed to the overall success of Bright Spots for Clubs and their community partners.

The Bellingham Unit of Boys & Girls Clubs of Whatcom County equipped their Bright Spot with all kinds of reading materials: magazines, cookbooks, repair/instruction manuals, city bus route schedules, textbooks, medical journals, etc. They even started a poetry club where members researched published poets, and then wrote and performed their own poetry. The activity "Review It," featuring a list of books that had been turned into movies, proved to be a big success at Bellingham. Members were surprised and unaware that many of their favorite movies were once books.

At the Rosemont Unit of Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Virginia, the Wii™ gaming system provided a creative way for engaging readers. Reluctant readers who were concerned about others making fun of their reading were comforted by the spirit of play in learning the words as they scrolled across the screen.

Members of Boys & Girls Clubs of Newport Co. created an exciting adventure for its members on a monthly overnight camping trip.



*Boys & Girls Clubs of Newport Co. members enjoy reading on their camping trip*

The Bright Spot participants biked with their counselors to a nearby campground for a fun-filled evening of swimming, cooking and reading. Members selected scary stories and those who were comfortable doing so read aloud to the group as they toasted and ate s'mores. As a special treat, teens were allowed to take the book they selected home.

Several of the Bright Spot Clubs brought in local authors or guest speakers as a catalyst for reading. Karen Dodson, a professor at Gainesville State College in Georgia, spoke with the members of the Jefferson Unit of Boys & Girls Club of Jackson County, Inc. about the art of reading and writing and demonstrated to them that they were already great storytellers.

Bright Spot participants also expanded their knowledge of Georgia authors by reading *Cold Sassy Tree*, the work of their nearby neighbor from Commerce, Ga., Olive Ann Burns. Their library provided a dozen copies on loan to the Club so that the teens could have the shared experience of a book club. Stephanie McDonald, the Bright Spot Coordinator at the Boys & Girls Club of Jackson County, Inc. is a perfect model for Boys & Girls Club staff. Although she is not an educator or a specialist in literacy, Stephanie is an avid reader who shares her love and enthusiasm for books in a way that the teens find inviting. She has infected her teens with her own love of reading.



## Rediscovering the Local Public Library

Partnerships between Clubs and public libraries have been extremely successful in communicating that the love of reading reaches beyond school walls. In some

Number of Bright Spot participants who have a library card: 2,793

communities, the partnership has been a fully mutual effort to increase reading throughout the community, such as by using bookmobiles, offering new library memberships to youth, and hosting youth competitions to sign up family members for library cards. Some community libraries have

taken extraordinary measures to ensure all Club youth obtained library cards. To ensure that all Club members had a chance to visit a library, several Clubs hosted special events at their local library. Some Bright Spots even feature lending libraries, bringing the library to the youth via the Club.

The local library in Venice, Calif., for example, designed a four-week writing series exclusively for Club members. Members wrote poems and stories and participated in spoken word and poetry jam sessions. Library staff tailored programs to the tweens and teens interests, and provided small incentives like book diaries, fun pens and pencils and prizes for those who frequented the library the most and/or who read the most books.

A “Picnic with the Library” program developed by the public library youth librarian for the Boys & Girls Club of Oshkosh. This opened new possibilities and excitement for what is possible at the local public library. The tweens and teens took weekly trips to a nearby park for a picnic lunch and “book talk.” The books were chosen and read the week before to discuss at the following week’s picnic. After the picnic, the members walked to



the library to choose a new book for the following week. The library books were maintained at the Club and read in the Bright Spot for Reading space. The coordinator of the program proclaims its success, saying, “It is a good 20-minute walk in the frequent hot summer weather to get from the Club to the park and library, but the kids were so excited to participate each week, they did not complain.”

*Members of HELP Committee and Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line encourage others to sign up for a free library card.*

The public library even has a branch inside the Richard E. Jeffers Unit of Boys & Girls Clubs of Wayne County Indiana. The library and the Club staff collaborate to identify books relevant to teens. The library staff select and organize displays and conduct the Club's summer reading program. Library volunteers also came in to read with Club youth and help mentor members.

The public library launched the Bright Spot for Reading initiative in partnership with the Jefferson Unit of Boys & Girls Club of Jackson County, Inc. by presenting and discussing books about their native northeast Georgia area and books by local authors. The first book they read, *The Tree That Owns Itself: And Other Adventure Tales From Out of the Past*, was by a local author. The members were thrilled to see so many books about places and things they were already familiar with.



*Club members read together at the Bright Spot of their local library*

## Using Technology to Encourage Reading

### Myclubmylife.com – Encouraging Reading in a Safe, Online Environment

Access to the larger world using technology is the reality for our members. Tweens and teens are more than comfortable accessing information and regularly reading current events and researching content in the online space. Capitalizing on this knowledge, BGCA created a website for teens – myclubmylife.com – and it lives up to its name.

Members who otherwise show little interest in traditional reading materials readily follow the book reviews and polls online. The exchanges on myclubmylife.com encourage a lively teen culture in the safe space of the Club. Teens review books, and they solicit reviews not only from their peers, but from celebrities like former NFL coach Tony Dungy, and other BGCA Youth of the Year. This sense of ownership and uniqueness has increased the appeal of the Club for teens. As the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Phoenix coordinator describes the effect, “We are developing group solidarity.”



*HELP Committee and Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line “chillaxing” on lounge chairs and reading in their Bright Spot*

### Audio Books and Podcasts

Bright Spot participants have discovered the ease and convenience of audio books. The audio book or podcast provides an efficient use of time for teens who have long bus rides. Those who struggle with traditional school-assigned books have also found that audio books allow them to engage in the material in an untraditional format. This is a practice that also has proven positive for many avid adult readers who use their daily commute to keep up with current titles through podcasts and audio books.

Reading enrichment opportunities in out-of-school time through the Club can nurture and provide a context for academic performance without being “school after school.” Podcasts, myclubmylife.com online reviews and video testimonials powerfully connect our teens to the joys of literacy.



*Members of Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester, Inc. recording a podcast*

## Being Role Models for Younger Members

Another effective way to engage Club members in reading is the opportunity to mentor younger members. The Challenger Boys & Girls Club uses incentives and recognition that the teens value by assigning reward points as the teen mentor reaches set benchmarks with their protégé. Benchmarks include number of books read per month, presentations, storytelling sessions and books contributed during book drives. The rewards include gift cards and field trips to museums, ball games or movies.

As the staff of the Bellingham Unit of Boys & Girls Clubs of Whatcom County report, when younger members see the tweens and teens reading in the Bright Spot, they are impressed. The staff encouraged the creation of Reading Partners, where a young member partners with a teen in a challenge to see who can get through a book first as they take turns alternating pages and chapters.



*Older members of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Chattanooga, East Lake Unit read to a younger Club member*

## Appendix

### Reading Recommendations from Club Teens!

The following book lists, originally published on myclubmylife.com, BGCA's website for teens, received the "Bright Spot Seal of Approval." Share these recommended reading lists with your tweens and teens. Additional book lists and recommended titles are available at myclubmylife.com.

#### **SCARY READING**

- *Felicity's Curse: A Heartstopper Horror* -- Robin Helene Vogel
- *The Horror at Camp Jellyjam* -- R.L. Stine
- *FEAR* -- R.L. Stine
- *The Spooks Tale and Other Horrors* -- Joseph Relarey
- *Zombie Queen of Newbry High* -- Amanda Ashby
- *Beautiful Darkness* -- Kami Garcia
- *Beautiful Creatures* -- Kami Garcia
- *Fallen* -- Lauren Kate
- *Clockwork Angel* -- Cassandra Clare
- *The Vampire Diaries* -- L.J. Smith

#### **SUMMER READING**

- *Things I Know About Love* -- Kate le Vann (Fiction)
- *The Star Shack* -- Lila Castle
- *It Girl #10: Classic* -- Cecily von Ziegesar
- *The Short Second Life of Bree Tanner (Eclipse Novella: The Twilight Series)* -- Stephenie Meyer
- *Heck: Where the Bad Kids Go* -- Dale E. Bayse
- *L.A. Candy* -- Lauren Conrad
- *The Twilight Saga: The Official Guide* -- Stephenie Meyer
- *Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream* -- Tanya Lee

#### **AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE**

- *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Freedom Movement* -- Lillie Patterson
- *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary* -- Walter Dean Myers
- *Coretta Scott King* -- Lillie Patterson
- *Rosa* -- Nikki Giovanni (Author) Bryan Collier (Illustrator)
- *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott* -- Russell Freedman
- *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story* -- Ben Carson
- *Jesse Jackson: Still Fighting for the Dream* -- Brenda S. Wilkinson
- *Days of Grace* -- Arthur Ashe and Arnold Rampersad

- *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* -- Laurence Bergreen
- *The Life of Langston Hughes (Volumes I and II)* -- Arnold Rampersad

### **HISPANIC HERITAGE**

- *Struggling to Become an American* -- Robin Santos Doak
- *César Chávez : Crusader for Social Change* -- Brenda Haugen
- *Flight to Freedom* -- Ana Veciana–Suarez
- *Before We Were Free* -- Julia Alvarez
- *Voices in First Person: Reflections on Latino Identity* -- edited by Lori Marie Carlson
- *Esperanza Rising* -- Pam Munoz Ryan
- *A Mango-Shaped Space* -- Wendy Mass
- *The Voice on the Radio* -- Caroline B. Cooney
- *Bajo la Alambrada* -- Francisco Jimenez
- *Crazy Loco* -- David Rice

### **NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE**

- *Native American Heritage* -- Merwyn S. Garbarino and Robert F. Sasso
- *Native American Son: The Life and Sporting Legend of Jim Thorpe* -- Kate Buford
- *Traditional Native American Arts and Activities (Celebrating our Heritage)* -- Arlette N. Braman
- *Open Wounds - A Native American Heritage* -- Aleksandra Ziolkowska-Boehm and Michael Michalak
- *The Indian Heritage of America (The American Heritage Library)* -- Alvin M. Josephy
- *Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians, 1790 to the Present* -- Arlene B. Hirschfelder
- *Big Book of Native American Activities (Native American Heritage)* -- Carol Marsh
- *Native American Chiefs & Warriors (History Makers)* -- Stuart A. Kallen
- *Native Americans (Successful Americans)* -- Kristine Brennan
- *Indian Summer: The Tragic Story of Louis Francis Sockalexis, the First Native American in Major League Baseball* -- Brian McDonald

## Additional Reading References and Online Resources

The following recommended books and articles are recommended for your Club's Learning Center/Bright Spot for Reading staff. These titles will provide insight into why reading matters, and how to further engage your members in the reading activities.

- "Adolescent Literacy and the Achievement Gap: What Do We Know and Where Do We Go from Here?" by Catherine E. Snow & Gina Biancarosa, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Adolescent Literacy Funders Meeting Report (2003).
- *Adolescent Literacy Development in Out-of-School Time: A Practitioner's Guidebook*, 2010 Final Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York's Council on Advancing Literacy.
- Beers, Kylene. *When Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do: A Guide for Teachers 6-12*, Heineman Publishers: Portsmouth, NH, 2003.
- Benson, Peter, *All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents*, (2006).
- Comer, James P., *Leave No Child Behind: Preparing Today's Youth for Tomorrow's World*. Yale University Press, 2004.
- Gallagher, Kelly. *Readicide: How Schools Are Killing Reading and What You Can Do About It*, Stenhouse Publishers, 2009.
- Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Penguin Books: New York, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2001. Also available online: [www.trelease-on-reading.com](http://www.trelease-on-reading.com)

Please access the following online resources to learn more about young adult literature recommendations, engaging adolescents in reading activities, and more.

- American Library Association: [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org): Click on "ALA Divisions," then "YALSA"
- Google Book Search: [www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com)
- Helpful articles for staff: [www.education.com](http://www.education.com); Search for the following articles: "Tips for Reading Aloud with Preteens and Teens"; "Teenagers and Reading"; "What Kids Who Don't Like to Read Like to Read"