

WVLS YOUTH SERVICES GRASSROOTS MEETING REPORT - March 09, 2016

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The 2016 Wisconsin Valley Library Service "Grassroots Gathering" discussion was held on Wednesday afternoon, March 9, 2016 following Children's Book Fest in Rhinelander. It was attended by 7 public youth librarians (representing small, medium and large libraries) and 1 school librarian from WVLS, one public youth librarian from Vilas Co. and a WVLS staff member. The discussion ran from 1:30 to 3:30 PM. Two other libraries had planned to be represented but Book Fest attendees were unable to stay.

The questions below used as discussion starters had been previously distributed to all WVLS K-12 and public youth librarians via the WVLS list servs.

1. **What youth services issues most concern your school or library at this time?**
2. **What are the best services that WVLS offers in the area of youth services? (What are we doing well?)**
3. **How can WVLS better support the needs of youth services librarians?**
4. **What are some ways that public and school librarians can work together in mutual advocacy and support of common goals?**
5. **What statewide coordination or assistance through DPI/DLT is essential to WVLS youth librarians?**
6. **What success stories or innovative programs would you like to share with the group?**

Question 1 Issues and challenges: Topics that sparked the longest conversations were (1) how to encourage more teen readers to participate in more library activities and programs and (2) how to provide more opportunities for youth services librarians to engage in face-to-face conversations and sharing of ideas.

Questions 2, 3 and 4:

- The WVLS list servs for K-12 and public youth librarians remain popular and useful.
- Annual youth services workshop was well attended and appreciated but there should be more opportunities like that. A couple youth librarians who attended the Pat Wagner workshop on "Button-proof leadership" were glad they took advantage of the opportunity and wanted to know if more workshops like that were planned.
- Suggestion that new youth librarians would appreciate orientation similar to those WVLS does for new directors
- Is there one place to look for all the essential tools and web links? (WVLS staff has since asked Grassroots Gathering participants to provide a focus group review the youth services page and make suggestions.)
- Webinars are like trying to work from home with everybody yelling at you – too many distractions, especially in smaller libraries so sign ups become "I'll watch it later" and then that doesn't happen.
- Would like more face to face opportunities for conversation and sharing. Peer support and mentoring is important when staff members are unable to attend state conferences; the once a year youth service workshop (though enjoyable) isn't enough.

The last one also came up at the 2015 Grassroots Gathering. This year's circle was ready to brainstorm for an action plan! Two of the participants offered to host a Gathering at their library in late April with a focus on tween/teen programming. It was suggested that another session in September could be about services to babies through school age, and one in January would focus on Summer Library Program. Together with the WVLS December youth services workshop and the opportunity to get together at Children's Book Fest, 6 opportunities would be provided. Rotated hosting by different libraries would showcase youth departments. Vilas Co. librarians would be specifically invited to the April meeting, with neighboring systems alerted once plans were firm (start small, add on). A four hour block from 11 to 2, including a working lunch was agreed upon to work around morning story times and after school programs.

Question 5: Tessa Michaelson Schmidt's emails to her YS list are much appreciated and were missed while she was on family leave! Grassroots participants hoped that the YS list wouldn't go away like WISPUBLIB.

Question 6: Topics discussed included middle school book talks, school/public library collaboration, teen and "tween" activities, book and movie programs, and baby/toddler programs. New librarians asked about sitting in on programs for age groups offered by other libraries, to see how it's done and gather ideas for possible replication in their libraries.