



USING A
SUBSCRIPTION
PROGRAM TO
**BOOST
CHILDREN'S
LITERACY**

TOLLESON SHARING LIBRARY

Tolleson, Arizona

NEEDS:

- Popular materials for children and teens
- Monthly delivery of hot new titles

OUTCOMES:

- Established a collection of new releases for children and teens that is refreshed continually
- Increased access to books for underserved segments of the local population
- Expanded leisure reading among teens

BACKGROUND

John Paul Lopez, Director of the Tolleson Parks & Recreation Center, has built a career in youth ministry and teaching. He was hired as a city employee in 2002 to help develop programming for kids and teens. Under his leadership, Tolleson formally launched its Parks and Recreation Center in 2018, in a facility that formerly housed a boys and girls club.

Early on in his tenure, he recognized an opportunity to help the local community that could be undertaken by the Center: Bring more books to more children and expand reading opportunities outside of school.

The City of Tolleson is largely populated by working-class families. Parents, who typically hold down multiple jobs, often don't have enough free time to go to the public library and obtain library cards for themselves or their children. As a result, local kids were missing out on getting library books. Even though there is a library bus that visits the Recreation Center every week, many of the kids were unable to check out books because they don't have library cards.

INTRODUCING A NEW PROGRAM

The seeds of the Sharing Library took root when Lopez had occasion to collaborate with the Tolleson Public Library director. She had just signed up for a McNaughton Community Lease Subscription to provide books for their senior center. Lopez immediately recognized the potential for using a similar program to better serve the community and provide books for kids. He contacted Brodart to explore possibilities of creating a new kind of library in the Parks and Recreation Center.



This custom sign, created by kids who use the Tolleson Sharing Library, is proudly displayed in the reading room for younger children.

The Tolleson Parks and Recreation Center Sharing Library opened in 2021. Under Brodart's guidance, they elected to go with a McNaughton Universal Plan to build their collection. This plan is perfect for libraries that need a simple process to select a broad range of titles by audience and format.

The Sharing Library is divided into two sections: one for teens and one for elementary-aged kids up to sixth grade. The library orders between 15 and 25 books per month, with about one third of the books for teens and two thirds for younger children.

In keeping with its mission to serve the needs of the local community, the Tolleson Parks and Recreation Center Sharing Library does not require borrowed books to be returned. Kids can simply keep the books they want or — if they choose to do so — return them for others to enjoy. Every month, regardless of whether all of the borrowed books have been returned, the library orders a new selection of recent releases. As a result, their collection always stays fresh and current.

Lopez realizes that the best bet to help the community is to give as many reading opportunities to kids and families as possible. This is especially important as the state of Arizona ranks among the lowest in the country in reading scores; a situation that was only exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. But there is hope — and the Sharing Library is making a difference.

RESULTS — TURNING THE CORNER

Having a steady supply of new books, with shipments coming in monthly, has been a vital element of the overall strategy. "Brodart is identifying the books that they know are popular with kids right now, so we're not worried about the collection being stagnant. That's a huge plus for me." Lopez relies on Brodart's selectors to keep up with current trends in publishing and reading, and to create appropriate selection lists.

What's in their collection? To support the varied interests of the kids who use the Sharing Library, books span a range of genres and subjects, including graphic novels for all age groups; anime; gaming books; popular titles for recreational reading, including romances; resources to help with life skills and "adulting"; test prep; college and career exploration; and more.



15-20
Books/Month



1/3
Books for Teens



2/3
Books for Young Children

Since the Tolleson Parks & Recreation Sharing Library is not a public library, it doesn't track circulations as a means to measure engagement and effectiveness. So, how does the staff know the program is working? As Lopez explains, "I know the Sharing Library is successful because the kids are using it. We're not overflowing with books on the shelves. They're being taken. Since we're getting monthly shipments of new books, it's obvious they're being used. And kids are bringing back some of the books to share, even though they're not required to. That's the best part. They're recommending books they like to other kids."

He continues, "If I walk into the library and ask, 'Who's read a book? What did you like about it?' I know that they're reading because they give me answers right away."

Building on the strength of a versatile McNaughton Subscription plan from Brodart, the Tolleson Parks & Recreation Center Sharing Library is fulfilling its true purpose to promote literacy by putting books in kids' hands.

*"I always tell our staff,
'Even if we just impact one
kid here today, we did a
great job. Getting a book in
front of one kid is far better
than none at all.'"*

- John Paul Lopez
Tolleson Sharing Library

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

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