

My name is Kari May, and I am the Director of Jackson County Library District in Southern Oregon. Last year, JCLD received just over \$36,000 in Ready to Read grant funds. These funds allow us to pilot new initiatives and test them before we commit regular budget funds to them. Some examples of new programs that were launched through grant funds include:

Beanstack - online tracking software for Summer Reading Program and other reading programs throughout the year.

1000 Books Before Kindergarten – piloted at our Medford branch, and, with funds from this grant, expanded to all 15 branch locations. Funds were also used to purchase books and backpacks as prizes for this program.

Outreach to Childcare – Provides activity bags, including books in English and Spanish, manipulatives, and musical instruments, that are used at childcare sites around the county.

Storytime @ home bags - were created to allow families to have a storytime experience at home while libraries can't offer programs in person. Families can check these bags out, and each bag includes a handful of books revolving around a theme, songs and rhymes that families can do at home, and activities that help expand on early literacy and learning. We created ten bags, including a Spanish bag and a bilingual Spanish/English bag.

Animated shorts on our website: This brand-new project was created out of a need for digital programming for children due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We partnered with an animator to make a series of six animated shorts focusing on reading and how reading can help foster imagination. These shorts will be available on our YouTube channel as they are released.

Enhanced Children's areas in our branches – Ready to Read funds were used to upgrade our Children's areas at four of our smaller branches this year, with plans to create more fun, interactive spaces in other branches over the coming years.

Rebuilding home libraries: The impact of wildfires on communities in Southern Oregon, particularly in Phoenix and Talent, was severe. JCLD was able to step in and offer support for families who lost their homes and all of their possessions. Staff led a very successful book and toy drive in October, which helped rebuild their home libraries. We were able to supplement our regular book giveaways with materials donated from our communities. Parents were grateful for this support that helped provide some normalcy for their children.

Funding from the State Library helps enhance the quality of programs and services that libraries across the state can offer to their communities. Funding for this program has remained constant at \$1.08 per child in the state for many years; imagine what more libraries could do if that funding were increased to \$1.50 per child. Jackson County Library District is fortunate to have dedicated funding for library services. Many of our smaller rural library systems struggle for adequate funding, and every dollar they receive goes even further than it does for my library.

I want to thank you all for investing in the future of our state through your commitment to library services and the Ready to Read Grant program.