

Teen interns shine at local libraries

By Erin McCusker

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Public libraries often tell of their challenges to reach out and engage with teens. Several Umatilla County public libraries hired teen interns this summer to connect with the teens in their communities.

Stephanie Partida, director of Athena Public Library, chose to hire a teen intern this year to help with the summer workload and to create an opportunity for a teen to learn how a library operates, experience a professional work environment and grow their resume.

James Simpson, assistant director at Pendleton Public Library, shared that they decided to host interns this summer because they saw the benefit of extra hands during the Summer Reading Program events.

Susana Sotelo, director of Umatilla Public Library, wanted to get teens into the library. The library's hope was that by hosting a teen intern, they would be able to gain an insight into what teens need and want to see at their library.

Partida and Sotelo both applied for and received a Teen Internship Grant from the State Library of Oregon. This grant provided funding for a summer teen intern at the library. The goal of the grant was for the teen to create a program, event or resource that reflects their interest while providing a community service.

In Athena, teen intern Luna Dennett has been expanding the library's outreach to the community by delivering a learning program at the local Tuesday Farmers Market.

In Umatilla, teen intern Jocelyn Silvani came to the library with the idea of an Anime Club for teens.

She planned a weekly program that will run for a month. She also took the lead on creating flyers, budgeted for the program and advertised in the community and on social media.

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While Pendleton Public Library did not apply for the grant, they chose to hire teen interns to provide two high school students with professional job experience, in addition to having the extra help during a very busy time of year.

All three librarians have seen the benefits of having teen interns in the library.

Partida shared that having a teen in the Athena Library has provided insight into how to better serve the teen community, improved the library's media presence and gave them a view through teen eyes. Additionally, they were able to see how valuable an internship has been to the library and opened the door to future internships.

Sotelo shared that the Umatilla Library has made connections with new teens, as well as provided an opportunity for a teen to develop professional skills and to learn what providing a service to the community is all about.

Simpson said that both interns have been great at assisting with prepping and helping to run the Pendleton Library's story times and events, as well as helping with the Parks & Recreation Summer Camp groups.

The following books were recommended by the teen interns — pick them up at any library in Umatilla County:

- "The Bell Jar" by Sylvia Plath
- "Big Magic" by Elizabeth Gilbert
- "Fight Club" by Chuck Palahniuk
- The Percy Jackson Series by Rick Riordan
- "Sea of Tranquility" by Emily St. John Mandel

Erin McCusker/Contributed Image

Umatilla County libraries hired teen interns this summer who developed a variety of programs, including an Anime Club at the Umatilla Public Library.

- "Simple Murder" by Linda Castillo
Find more information at www.ucslid.org/.

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