

Starting a Laundromat Library League Branch in Your Area



All it takes is one or two people that care enough that all children should have children's books who will spend some time and energy making it happen! It helps if those one to two people belong to an organization in which they can engage others in participating, but that is not necessary.

Here are the basics:

LAUNDROMATS: You need to find a laundromat and track down the owner or manager for permission to place a "Library Box" of children's books there. This can be the hardest part of the project -- but WE CAN HELP. We will be happy to provide written materials you can share with the owner/manager. You should assure the owner that someone will visit the site to freshen the Library Box with replacement books and clear out extraneous material (e.g. Avon catalogs, religious tracts, etc.). Ideally these visits will be twice a month and you should also explain that the box is only for children's books, nothing else.

ACQUIRING BOOKS: This is the easiest part of the project. If we can find an inexpensive way to get them to you we can supply the initial Library Box inventory, which is 60-80 books distributed over an age range from toddler through youth. If your area has a Latino population of significance and we have sufficient supplies, some of these books will be in Spanish. If logistics allow, we can keep you well-stocked with replacement books. But if not, here are potential sources:



- **School librarians** (public and private) often have duplicates and weed-outs and are eager to get them into the hands of young readers. You just need to ask and be willing to pick them up.
- Schools, churches, bookstores, and various other organizations that have **used book sales** (sometimes as part of a Fall Fair or other annual event) often are happy to have a destination for the leftovers.
- County and municipal **libraries** also will pass on duplicates, weed-outs, leftovers from sales, etc.

The above sources provided us with over 20,000 books in the first two years of operation and we now receive regular calls from libraries and schools to, for example, "come pick up six boxes of books." However, those sources rarely if ever have toddler board books or books in Spanish among their donations. To acquire toddler board (cardboard) books we suggest:

- Interest organizations, schools, or businesses in **holding a drive for "books for toddlers."** We can send you an attractive flyer adapted with the name and location of the entity holding the drive and other information related to that drive. These drives have been held for us by a university student

group, a nursery school, an elementary school, a Boy Scout troop, and a business. Note that toddler books are often inexpensive and relatively easy for donors to find and bring in. Books in Spanish are less so.

- Interest organizations and individuals in **donating money for the purchase of books in Spanish.** The Laundromat Library League is a 501c3 and can document donations for tax purposes. We have a bank account and can receive those donations (earmarked for your use in your area) and write a check to you for book purchases. We have some sources of less expensive books in Spanish (and are seeking others).

LIBRARY BOX CONTAINERS: We use **simple cardboard boxes**, called banker's boxes, that can be purchased from office supply stores such as Staples. They have white sides and we get children and other volunteer groups to decorate them with markers. Then we affix **laminated signs** (one in English and one in Spanish) to the box or on the wall above it. These signs invite people to take books, use them for awhile, and return if and when convenient. (It's okay if the books are not returned.)

Each Box is reinforced with a bright band of duct tape at the top and bottom, and is further strengthened by placing the lid under it as it sits in the Laundromat. The laminated signs can be affixed to the box or taped to the wall above it or near it.

Each book has a label on the front that invites children to "Read It. Love It. Pass It On." When the book is in Spanish this label is in Spanish. The label also contains the Laundromat Library League name and web address.

If logistics allow, we can get this box to you but if not, it's fairly easy to create the box. We can send you the laminated signs or we can email them so you can print them and have them laminated at Kinkos or a similar establishment. We can also provide the Word document that is used to print the book labels.

We are moving toward using boxes that are sturdier (plywood or similar material) and once we have figured out the funding we can share more.

STORAGE AND ASSEMBLY SPACE: If you only engage one or two laundromats the books can be maintained in someone's home. We have over 40 local laundromats involved in our area so we have the use of basement space at West Chester Friends School for assembly and storage of quick-use books. We have also rented space for longer term inventory. (Donating space or funds for renting space would be an appropriate item to approach a donor about—service clubs, for example.)

VOLUNTEERS: Usually we ask each volunteer to do only one thing—for example, to freshen the Library Box in the first week of each month (and then someone else to do the same in the third week of each month) —and we assure them that they will never be expected to attend a meeting. This gets 'yes' responses, especially if the laundromat is near a home-to-work or similar route.

We'd be happy to brainstorm other ways in which the project can be carved into many small tasks that encourage individuals to become involved.

Those are the ingredients of a successful project. It's easy and it's FUN! Let us know how we can assist you with thinking and with resources so you can participate!!!

Who can I contact to get started?

Karen Iacobucci: responsible for inventory maintenance library/box assembly

kiacobucci@wcfriends.org or 610-696-2820

Arlene Rengert: responsible for driver and site coordination and organization outreach

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www.laundromatlibraryleague.org

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