



school libraries project

INSPIRING THE BEST IN OUR CHILDREN

A school library can and should be the heartbeat of every school. The eight public elementary and middle school libraries in the Capitol Hill neighborhood selected for this pilot project are inadequate, antiquated, and lack the basic resources to support learning and achievement. The goal of the School Libraries Project is to transform these eight school libraries into vital learning spaces that will inspire students to learn and explore.

FOSTERING A SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION AND RENEWAL

Understanding that much can be achieved through cooperation, in January 2005 a coalition of parents, teachers and principals from the eight Capitol Hill schools joined forces to define ways to improve these schools. At present, two Capitol Hill school libraries are closed because they lack library staffing, four of the eight have book collections that were last updated in the 1970's. All lack modern technology, well-stocked core book collections, and a physical environment conducive to learning.

The sub-standard condition of the libraries was identified as a critical concern common to all the schools, and thus, the School Libraries

Project was born. The project has been adopted as an initiative of the Capitol Hill Community Foundation, which will use its 16 years of experience to help mobilize community and national support for this endeavor.

KEY CHALLENGES

Right now, 50% of our 2500 students are reading below grade level. Imagine the positive impact that this consortium of new and technologically progressive libraries can have on the development of these children.

Recent statistics on school libraries and achievement show:

- When library and media center predictors are maximized (e.g., staffing, expenditures, and information resources and technologies) scores on standard achievement tests are 15% -20% higher. *How School Libraries Help Students Achieve Standards*; The Second Colorado Study; Lance, Rodney, Hamilton-Pennell; 2000
- Schools that have large and up to date collections of periodicals and print volumes have statistically significant increases in achievement at all levels. *Powerful Libraries Make Powerful Learners*: The Illinois Study; Illinois School Library Media Association; March 2005

- A strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher achievement regardless of the socio-economic or educational levels of the adults in the community. *School Libraries Work! Scholastic Research Foundation*; Updated 2006 Edition.

SUCCESSFUL MODELS

This initiative was inspired by two successful school library projects. In 2002, the Robin Hood Foundation, a non-profit agency combating poverty in New York, started the Llibrary Initiative. The Llibrary Initiative has brought together leading New York architects to re-imagine the libraries at 31 public schools. The libraries that have been created are whimsical, fantastical spaces that have won architecture awards and have become essential resources to the teachers and students.

Here in Washington, DC, the J.O. Wilson Library, also located in our neighborhood, was similarly transformed in 2004 by the Friends of the J.O. Wilson Library. The Friends raised \$200,000, and turned what had been a dark, uninviting space with water damaged books into a bright space that boasts art murals, and all new books, furniture, and computers. This new library has become the academic heart and the soul of the school community.

“When this library first opened,” said Isaiah Ross, a fifth grader, “I promised myself I’d read every dinosaur book here.”

taken from *The New York Times*, on the Library Initiative in New York City

CREATING THE BEST LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The goal is to create environments where school children will be inspired and challenged to learn and reach their fullest potential. The design will include a new layout, colorful walls, bookshelves, flooring, lighting, furniture, and state-of-the-art technology.

The Washington Architectural Foundation (WAF), whose mission is to provide education and resources to build a better city, has identified eight dedicated architects who are working on a pro bono basis to design new library spaces for the School Libraries Project. David Shove-Brown with Catholic University of America and the firm Workshop is the lead architect overseeing the project. Our schools are assigned to the following prestigious architects:

Maury (1250 Constitution Ave. NE)
Victoria Kiechel Architect

Brent (330 3rd St. SE)
Lawlor Architects

Payne (305 15 St SE)
Studio 27

Ludlow-Taylor (659 G St. NE)
Meditch Murphey Architects

Tyler (1001 G St. SE)
Hartman-Cox Architects

Peabody (425 C St. NE)
Mancini Duffy

Watkins (420 12 St. SE)
Bonstra Architects

Stuart-Hobson (410 E St. NE)
Catholic University of America design collaborative (CUAdc)

Tom Regan of Regan Associates, a real estate development company with 32 years of experience, has agreed to take on the management of the construction phase of this initiative on a pro-bono basis.

FORTUNATE TIMING

The 2005 Federal payment to the District of Columbia included \$6Million to be used for library resources in the 110 public elementary schools in the City. DC Public Schools will match the Federal payment with an additional \$6Million for facility upgrades in these schools. In passing this appropriation, the Congress hoped to encourage private investment in our school libraries.

The School Libraries Project intends to live up to this challenge. The plan is to solicit foundation, corporate and individual contributions to fund each library’s renovation and programmatic initiatives. We will ensure

that the rehabilitation of our school libraries goes well beyond merely new paint and carpeting.

BUDGET

The construction budget for the project is \$2Million, which will include the renovation of the libraries, furnishings, books and materials, and up to date technology for the eight neighborhood schools participating in the Project. A pro rata portion of the Federal and DCPS funding will be included in the budget for the project.

A VIBRANT LEGACY TO BUILD ON

The hope of the School Libraries Project is to be a replicable model for the other elementary and middle school libraries in Washington, DC. What the Robin Hood Foundation in New York has achieved is an inspiration of what we can accomplish on Capitol Hill and throughout Washington, DC.

For more information on how you can help, contact **Suzanne Wells** at 547-2477 m.godec@att.net or **Todd Cymrot** at 997-3296 or todd.cymrot@verizon.net.