

Honorable Mayor and Members
of the City Council
City Hall
Torrance, California

Members of the Council:

SUBJECT: Community Services - Accept and appropriate grant funds in the amount of \$12,274 from the California State Library, and \$8,363 from the Torrance Public Library Foundation to fund the *Live Homework Help* Program

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of the Community Services Director that the City Council accept and appropriate a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant in the amount of \$12,274, and a donation of \$8,363 from the Torrance Public Library Foundation, to fund the on-line *Live Homework Help* program for fiscal year 2008-09.

Funding

Funding is available from the California State Library LSTA grant and from a donation from the Torrance Public Library Foundation [FEAP 622-Library on-line Live Homework Help program].

BACKGROUND

The California State Library has used Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to assist pre-selected public libraries in providing on-line homework help services. In August 2006, the Torrance Public Library received a grant from the State Library for a subscription to *Live Homework Help* (LHH) provided by the vendor **Tutor.com**. The service inaugurated in September 2006, and usage statistics and response from students and parents has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 4,500 students using the service in academic year 2007-08.

This homework help program was designed as a three-year descending grant with participating libraries picking up a larger share of the cost in successive years. The cost of LHH is based on the service area population, with the total cost for FY 2008-09 to the Torrance Public Library assessed at \$20,637.

This will be Torrance Public Library's third year of participation; at this juncture, the LSTA grant pays 50% of the cost of the program, and the Library has to provide the remaining 50%. The Torrance Public Library Foundation has generously agreed to fund the Library's 2008-09 cost of \$8,363 (in a special price reduction for California libraries, Tutor.com lowered the cost to the Torrance Public Library). In FY 2009-10, the State Library will cease to fund LHH; consequently, the Library will be responsible for 100% of the cost and will need to identify funding sources to continue the service.

ANALYSIS

While the Torrance Public Library and Torrance Unified School District (TUSD) provide remedial after-school support and in-person homework assistance, these programs are available only at school or library sites and are limited by a variety of factors including restrictions on eligibility, physical space, and the availability and skills of volunteers. The desire to provide high quality homework assistance due to demand from parents and students caused the Library to seek out the *Live Homework Help* service. Activity reports indicate high use in the subjects of high school sciences, mathematics, and writing skills. A majority of usage is remote, with students logging on from personal computers at home or outside a City of Torrance facility, indicating LHH is complementary to in-library services and is reaching a student population formerly without homework assistance opportunities.

Any student with a Torrance Public Library card can use the service either remotely via a PC or Macintosh or from any Torrance Public Library computer. The service is available seven days a week from 1 p.m. - 10 p.m.; Spanish language assistance is also available Sunday – Thursday, from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Students in 4th -12th grades as well as college freshmen can use the service as often as they wish, and receive core academic assistance with math, science, social studies, and English from live tutors. Students click on the LHH link on the Library’s website, select their grade level and the subject they need help with, and are connected to a qualified tutor. Student and tutor enter an “online classroom” where they use a variety of tools, including instant messaging and a dynamic whiteboard with drawing and math tools, to communicate. Live Homework Help tutors are certified teachers, college professors, graduate school students and undergraduates from top universities. Every tutor undergoes rigorous training and evaluation and a security background check.

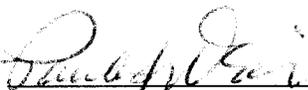
In fulfilling the Torrance Public Library’s mission to serve as a site for curriculum and academic support for students, *Live Homework Help* has proven invaluable and contributes to increased student access to homework assistance resources thereby serving to guarantee academic success. The Library is looking forward to continuing the service.

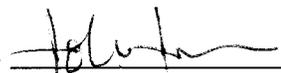
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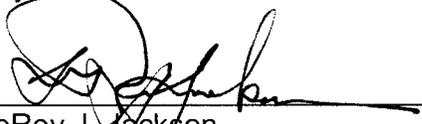
JOHN JONES
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

By 
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