

Council Meeting of
June 28, 2011

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

Members of the Council:

SUBJECT: Community Services – Accept and appropriate \$37,420 donation from Friends of the Torrance Library.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation of the Community Services Director that City Council accept and appropriate a \$17,500 donation to help fund the Library's Live Homework Help program and a donation of \$19,920 to fund adult programming at the six Torrance libraries in fiscal year 2011-12 from the Friends of the Torrance Library.

Funding

Funding in the amount of \$37,420 is available from the Friends of the Torrance Library. (\$17,500 in FEAP 622 – Library on-line Live Homework Help program)

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

In August 2006, the Torrance Public Library began offering the *Live Homework Help* service with a grant from the California State Library. Live Homework Help (LHH) is an online homework assistance program that assists students in grades K – 12 and college introductory level in core academic subjects – English, math, science, and social studies. The program, provided by the vendor Tutor.com, connects students with live tutors via its Internet site. There is also a component where a user can request proofreading of documents, as well as a skills center. The tutors are available seven days per week from 1 p.m. – 10 p.m., and the skills center is available 24/7. Any student with a Torrance Public Library card can use LHH from a Library computer or from any computer with Internet access.

The State Library grant was a descending grant, providing financial support for three years: matching funding for years two and three was provided by the Friends of the Torrance Library and the Torrance Public Library Foundation. In FY 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center Torrance generously funded the entire cost of the program \$35,000. At the May 25 Board Meeting, the Friends of the Torrance Library voted to donate half the cost of maintaining the service for FY 2011-12.

Lack of available City funding for programming has resulted in a lengthy partnership between the Torrance Public Library and the Friends of the Torrance Library to both host and sponsor programs and events. Over the past several years, the Torrance Public Library and the Friends have developed a reputation for providing innovative and interesting cultural, educational, and recreational programming to the Library's community of users, and these programs are now an established and expected element of the Library's Plan of Service.

Programs for adults – from author presentations to demonstrations and lectures – are promoted prominently on the City's events calendar, the Library's web page, through the Library's monthly calendar of events, via local news sources, and by distribution of flyers in the libraries and at other community locations. The availability and success of library programs would not be possible without the generous support of the Friends of the Torrance Library. At their May 25, 2011 Board meeting, the Friends considered and approved a proposal from Library staff requesting an amount not to exceed \$19,920 to provide a variety of high-quality adult programs throughout fiscal year 2011-12. All necessary costs such as speaker fees, refreshments, publicity, and supplies were included.

Library staff approached the Friends of the Torrance Library requesting support for 2011-12, and the Friends committed to partially fund the *Live Homework Help* program this year. An examination of vendors offering a similar service found only one comparable, and the cost was slightly higher. Tutor.com has provided five years of excellent service to the students of Torrance, along with positive feedback from the majority of survey responders.

In particular, the hosting and presentation of adult cultural programming helps the Library fulfill its role as a center for lifelong learning, and satisfies not only the cultural needs of Torrance citizenry, but also the need of people to meet and interact while providing opportunities to participate in public discourse on a wide range of issues and ideas. Staff at the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library and the five branch libraries will plan and implement a selection of programs for adults in the 2011-12 fiscal year that meet community interests and needs, while supporting and promoting the Library and its many resources. Among programs planned are author talks, the ongoing Monthly Move Presentation, and special recognitions for commemorative events such as Women's History Month, National Library Week, Asian Pacific Heritage Month, etc.

The Friends of the Torrance Library have continued to provide essential monetary and volunteer support for adult cultural and information programming for the Torrance community. Evaluations submitted by participants attending the various programs have been consistently positive and library users have come to expect a rich calendar of events year-round. As well as providing personal growth and enrichment of the individual, the acceptance of this grant will support the Library with the necessary resources to continue this valued service and fulfill a strategic priority of the City.

The Library and the Community Services Director therefore request that the City Council accept these two very generous donations from the Friends of Torrance Library.

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN JONES
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

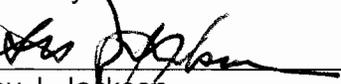
CONCUR:



John Jones
Community Services Director

By 

Hillary Theyer, Acting City Librarian



LeRoy J. Jackson
City Manager

Attachments: A) May 25, 2011 Proposal for Live Homework Help for FY 2011-12
B) May 16, 2011 Memo – Proposal for Funding Assistance – Adult Programming

May 25, 2011

TO: Friends of the Torrance Library
FROM: Hillary Theyer, Acting City Librarian
SUBJECT: Proposal for funding one-half the cost of Live Homework Help for FY 2011-12

Recommendation

The Acting City Librarian requests that the Friends of the Torrance Library support one-half of the costs to subscribe to Live Homework Help for FY 2011-12, for a cost of \$17,500.

Background

The Torrance Public Library started a subscription to Live Homework Help in order to support students who were unable to visit a library during the after school hours, or who required assistance when the library was closed. For the first three years, this was a descending grant from the California State Library, with the match provided by the Friends of the Torrance Library (year 1) and the Torrance Public Library Foundation (years 2 and 3). Starting in FY 2009-2010, Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center Torrance funded the entire cost of the service. For FY 2011-12, Providence has sponsored half the cost, donating \$17,500 toward the total cost of \$35,000.

When the Library started this service, it was with the vision of absorbing the cost into the operating budget. With ongoing cuts to the City's budget, we are unable to fund this service at this time without cutting from another place – either a staff position or into the remaining book budget. With the funding of half by Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center Torrance, in absence of your support the Library would take the remaining \$17,500 from the trust fund to save the program for FY 2011-12.

All publicity for the service would bear the sponsorship information of both donors – Providence and the Friends – for the entire academic year. This publicity reaches school children through the visits of Library staff to open houses, faculty meetings, PTA meetings, and the like. It is also prominently featured on the Library's web presence, and with full-color fliers in every location. The Library would also like to accept the donation before City Council in June.

Costs

Library staff conducted an analysis of vendors on the market, and requested quotes from the two that met all of the Library's criteria – Tutor.com (current provider of Live Homework Help) and Brainfuse (provider of a service called Help Now). Tutor.com was the lowest quote that met all the criteria, and has provided excellent service to the Torrance Public Library for the past few years.

Conclusion

The Library requests support for one-half of the costs of Live Homework Help for FY 2011-12 for a cost of \$17,500. This will enable the Library to provide the service for one more year, as we continue to seek a permanent funding source.

Respectfully submitted,

By 
Hillary Theyer,
Acting City Librarian

May 16, 2011

TO: Friends of the Torrance Library

FROM: Dana Vinke, Acting Principal Librarian
Hillary Theyer, Acting City Librarian

SUBJECT: Proposal for Funding Assistance – Adult Programming FY 2011-2012

Recommendation

The Acting Principal Librarian and Acting City Librarian respectfully request that the Friends of the Torrance Library provide funding to support the Library's adult cultural and informational programming for FY 2011-2012 in an amount not to exceed \$19,920.

Background

The Friends of the Torrance Library have for many years generously sponsored programming arranged by staff for patrons of all ages and presented at the six Torrance libraries. The funding has enriched the offerings of the Torrance Public Library to include a wide variety of educational, cultural, and recreational programs.

Due to the current economic climate and simultaneous cutbacks in opportunities for free activities, library programs are increasingly popular. To compensate, staff has increased programming at all locations, in particular at the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library, to several per month. Noted authors and speakers such as Dr. Tricia Toyota and Stan Chambers were recent popular events. The Library also hosted self development, financial literacy, and career planning workshops.

Staff examined the surveys completed by participants at previous programs to determine preferred future events and based on that analysis, the funding request for FY 2011-12 is as follows:

Movie License

\$4,920

This is a renewal of the annual movie license from Movie Licensing USA to allow the presentation of full-length feature films at all six Library locations. In the past year, the license has supported movie nights for teens at several branch libraries, a popular event often planned by the Teen Advisory Boards. The Monthly Movie Presentation at the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library continues to attract a large audience, and with the addition of equipment in the Polly Watts Story Theater, a movie screened in the Community Meeting Room can now be simultaneously shown in the Theater (a more comfortable setting for families). Movies can also augment programs – *Robin Hood* was shown as a component of the successful "The Outlaw Robin Hood" activities in September and October 2010.

Adult Programs at the Katy Geissert Civic Center Library

\$9,000

Funding from the Friends of the Library again allowed the Library to present many outstanding and popular programs in 2010-11 including:

Author Visits – in addition to those authors noted above, Rebecca K. O'Connor, author of *Lift*; Jenny Cho, author of *Chinatown in Los Angeles*; Deanne Stillman, author of *Mustang: the Saga of the American West*; and Tom Ogden, author of *Haunted Hollywood*, spoke at the Library during 2010-11.

Educational Programs – The Library featured astronaut Captain Dick Richards in the popular *Meet the Astronaut* program, while authors David Hamlin and Bret Arena used vintage photographs to explore the historic LA Market while presenting the program, *Los Angeles' Original Farmers Market*.

Musical Programs – In 2010-11, the Library again featured acclaimed harpist Dr. Vanessa Sheldon, who performed to a standing-room only crowd. Classical guitarist Peter Fletcher performed as well, allowing the Library to offer performing arts in a different setting.

Assistance Programs – Local experts on topics such as elder care, healthcare, and financial planning led discussions about the most recent research and treatment. These programs often included working with community partners, such as the Health and Elder Law Program, and the Torrance Police Department.

In addition to the above, the Library offered diverse programs including various crafts, and *Southern California Eats* by authors Adriene Biondo and John Eng.

Branch Library Programming

\$3500

Due to ongoing staffing issues, a decrease in funding from \$800 to \$700 per branch for FY 2011-12 is being requested. Craft programs at the Southeast Library and El Retiro Library continue to fill to capacity, most times with a waiting list. WALTERIA will repeat the successful "*Brain Games for Grown Ups*" program in conjunction with the Torrance Adult School. Henderson Library recently hosted a *Story Slam Café* program and has several other programs in the planning stage.

Printing/Public Relations

\$2500

A cost that has increased significantly is publicity. Posters in library lobbies continue to attract attention, and are frequently cited in surveys as the primary way to attract patrons' attention, and are also cited as the primary way patrons find out about specific programs. The foam board, printing and mounting is quite costly and specific colors of paper are not stocked by the City's Central Services Division (print shop) so as a result, some materials to print program flyers and posters must be purchased separately. Though all electronic means of publicizing events including the City's online *Calendar of Events*, *Torrance Seasons*, and local publications such as the *Daily Breeze* and *Easy Reader* are utilized, advertising continues to be crucial to successful programming. We are therefore requesting funding specifically for this purpose.

As part of the request for FY 2010-11, the Library requested funding for a laptop computer to be used for programming and events, for an amount not to exceed \$5,000. This computer ended up costing much less than anticipated, a total of \$1,004.27. The remainder of these funds is still in the programming budget and will carry over to FY 2011-12.

Conclusion

All Torrance Library programs are free and open to the public. Staff schedules a variety of events to appeal to diverse audiences and meet the schedules of various age and demographic groups. Feedback continues to be very positive, and demand continues to grow.

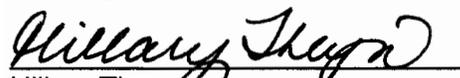
The continued generosity of the Friends of the Torrance Library in funding Adult Programming enables the Torrance Public Library to fulfill its mission. These programs tie into the resources available at the Library, and encourage use of the Torrance Public Library as a community center and hub of culture in the South Bay.

Respectfully submitted,



Dana Vinke
Acting Principal Librarian

CONCUR:



Hillary Theyer
Acting City Librarian