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PRESS RELEASE

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Teens Donate Leisure Hours to Library

Wylie, TX, July 9, 2014 – Smith Public Library had space for 22 teen volunteers this summer, and all the slots are filled.

“I’ve always been volunteering somewhere,” said Jaqueline Ramirez, who will be in eighth grade at McMillan Junior High when school starts. “I’ve sacked lunches for the homeless, collected shoes for people in Honduras ... volunteering here is fun. I really love reading.”

Kids between the ages of 13 and 17 are donating part of their vacation to the library, working to re-shelve books and other materials, putting wrist bands on kids coming to programs, and painting faces and handing out popsicles at special events. Anna Seida, a home-schooled 12th-grader, and Dakota Koop, a 10th-grader who is also home-schooled, took turns dressing as Clifford the Big Red Dog at the summer reading kick-off at the beginning of the summer.

What brings these kids to the library rather than sleeping in, playing video games or myriad other activities they could be doing?

The love for books is something the volunteers have in common. Anna said she also loves organization. “I can be organized, putting books on shelves at home – but I can help out by doing it here. I figured this would be a good fit.”

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Dakota said she enjoyed reading Alice Seibold's "The Lovely Bones," and Squid Solis, a ninth-grade home-school student, said he enjoys Christopher Paolini's work. He also said he thinks "people underestimate books these days," that lots of good information can be found in their pages. Anna said it's also wonderful to "immerse yourself in another world." It's not just the love of books that brings these kids to the shelves at Smith. There's a culture of volunteerism and "giving back" in all their homes.

"We were taught to give more than to receive," said Sophia Solis, a 10th-grade home-schooler and Squid's sister. "I've been coming to the library my whole life, and I always looked forward to volunteering here. I like the environment, I like kids and I like helping."

Jacqueline said her parents taught her to be humble and to give back, paying attention to those who may be struggling. Dakota said she has been going to the library since it was in its former location – the library moved to its current 44,000-square-foot facility in 2011 – and the staff has always been helpful to her, assisting her with the books she needed to supplement her home-school studies, and she is happy to return the favor.

"Service should be part of everybody's life," said Squid. "It should start with the community."

His sister agreed. "America needs to lend a hand more and save those who need it."

Youth Services Supervisor Ofilia Barrera said she couldn't survive the summer without her teen volunteers. "There is no way we could get everything back to the shelves without their help. We are lucky that they often come back multiple summers or choose to stay with us through the school year."

She said they quickly become part of the library “family.”

“We often get to know them and their families. I’ve got former volunteers who come back and visit, even after they’ve gone off to college.”

Jacqueline said she thinks more people should come to the library. “You never know what you can find here!”

One thing any visitor is sure to find: some service-minded kids who are on the right track.

For more information about the library or its programs, visit www.wylietexas.gov/library .

Cutline:

From left, Jacqueline Ramirez, Squid Solis, Dakota Koop, Sophia Solis and Anna Seida are volunteering at Wylie’s Smith Public Library this summer, choosing to give back to the community and enjoy being surrounded by books.

Photo courtesy City of Wylie Public Information

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About Wylie -- Incorporated in 1887, the City of Wylie is located just 24 miles from downtown Dallas in Collin, Dallas and Rockwall counties. Possessing an outstanding school district, a low crime rate, an ISO #1 rating and an expanding business climate, Wylie (population 44,158) is one of the fastest-growing communities in the State of Texas with a 192% increase since 2000.