BOOKS IN PRISONS

Nomination for Letha H. Brown Literacy Award

5th March 2019

ALTRUSA CLUB OF HAWERA

22 Manawapou Road
Hawera 4610
Taranaki
New Zealand

DISTRICT FIFTEEN
Letha H. Brown Literacy Award
ENTRY FORM

Please type. (If you need additional room, please add separate sheets of paper to the Entry Form.)

District: Fifteen

Name of Altrusa Club: Altrusa club of Hawera

Address: 22 Manawapou Road

City: Hawera State/Province: Taranaki

Country: New Zealand Zip/Postal Code: 4610

Contact Person: Diane Bourke

Telephone: 027 4679492 E-mail: diane_bourke@hotmail.com

Date (day, month, year): 5/3/2019

Club Membership (as of entry date): 30

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Project Title: BOOKS IN PRISONS

Project Description:
The narrative must not exceed 1,000 words, must be typed and on plain white paper or background. In developing the narrative, Clubs should refer to the judging criteria and score sheet. Please refer to the section entitled, "Entry Preparation," Item 4 for questions that should be addressed in the narrative to assist judges in evaluating your submission.

View the Submission Contact List to submit your completed entry to the designated Awards Chair of your District.

The winning entries at the District Conferences must reach the International Office by June 1st to be considered in the International competition.

Page 7 of 7 Award Entries will NOT be returned unless requested in writing Revised July 2018
SELECTION OF PROJECT.
Whanganui Men’s Prison is the nearest prison in our area for offenders sentenced to serve time.

These men are not all hardened criminals. Many are suffering from addictions, mental illness, have come from disfunctional families or are a result of intergenerational offenders and many are not much more than boys.

Our goal was to provide appropriate reading materials with the aim of improving literacy, learning and making prison a second chance environment.

These men are behind bars for a variety of reasons but the one thing they have in common is that they are separated from their friends and families and for those with children they are cut off from being the father / grandfather they want to or need to be.

All members were asked to be involved. A sub committee was formed to identify what was required and how we could meet those needs and to keep members informed.

After discussion with a defence lawyer (my son) and hearing some of the heartbreaking stories of some offenders I felt encouraged to make a
difference in these men’s lives without prejudice while incarcerated especially with literacy being our focus.

A library already exists at the prison but with insufficient books of interest and incomplete books in series. Individuals do sometimes donate books but they are not always what is needed or of interest.

Many of the men have never been read to as a child and statistics from the prison show 70% of the population do not have level 1 or 2 NCEA and 80% are reading at below the level of an eight year old.

Child Poverty is a phrase being bandied around by our politicians every day of the week. I believe the major source of this in NZ is dysfunctional families therefore as well as books we aimed to provide laptops and CDs to allow men to be taught to read and then record themselves reading appropriate age books to be sent home to their children to listen to. This enables the children to be part of their lives in a positive way and the dad to have a sense of self worth and self esteem and a connection with the child.

Studies show that these storybook programmes help keep families together and may help break the cycle of generational offending.

We also wanted to provide books to promote a joy of reading and the love of books to help fight boredom, educate and entertain, provide inspiration,
self help and an escape from reality as well as developing literacy skills and respect for books.

This project was discussed and passed at our Board meeting then presented to members for approval. All were enthusiastic and there was overwhelming support to be involved and make contributions.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT:

Subcommittee began the groundwork.

Firstly the Prison Advisor for Rehabilitation was contacted to ensure that this project was of value and to gauge interest before proceeding.

She was extremely grateful and described our offer as “fabulously considered and a generous proposal”. Now having the green light, we liaised with the prison librarian who was very excited and provided us with her ‘wishlist’ which included genres most requested and popular magazines as well as books required to complete a series.

Subcommittee kept the Board and members informed as the project developed. We aimed to have books, laptops and CDs collected, sorted and delivered by November. Sub committee members approached businesses to best deals for laptops and CDs. One local business was very keen to be
involved and we were offered two laptops at cost. A very generous offer which we accepted.

With two of our members also belonging to St. Vincent de Paul we decided to approach them to see if they would like to be involved as Social Justice is a high priority there.

They were very happy to be involved and made the offer to fund the laptops and work with us collecting books. This project was also noted in their national Newsletter.

Members were asked to be involved by participating in our Mother / Daughter fashion parade as a fundraiser. Those not modelling were selling tickets and providing supper for the evening. Most donated new or good 2nd hand books. A working bee saw books being sorted and boxed for delivery. Any books of inferior quality were removed.

Three Altrusa members and two from St. Vincent de Paul travelled to Whanganui Prison to present the material where we were met and photographed for their local paper. We were shown the workings of the prison and given a tour of the library.

We presented 140 books, two laptops and 100 blank CDs with covers.

Hours recorded totalled 95.
We had support from friends and family.

The local library donated a number of magazines about performance cars and men’s health which were very popular.

Alison Condon author of ‘The Chronicles of Paki’ donated a complete series on the Treaty of Waitangi written for younger readers especially boys.

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

Objectives were certainly met and the project has since grown due to ongoing communication with the prison librarian and the continued donations from the library, St Vincent de Paul and members.

The librarian was our guest speaker at a meeting and expressed her desire for more recreational reading and activities and her wish to be able to include jigsaw puzzles. Consequently we have sourced another box of books including How to Draw, Origami, Magic Tricks, Chess etc.

We presented 40 jigsaw puzzles all donated by members.

There are 530 men in the prison. All material is available to them no matter what their crime.
This project involved the community and provided Altrusa awareness with an article in the newspaper, prison newsletter, St Vincent de Paul newsletter.

A letter of endorsement from the Hon Chester Borrows QSO confirmed to me this was a project of worth and I see us having an ongoing relationship with the prison.
SYNOPSIS

Helping incarcerated dads start a new chapter with their children and create a bond between them whilst improving their own literacy skills and learning the joy of reading.

With donations of laptops, CDs and books, dads can record stories for their child to listen to their father’s voice, reading to them helping them to feel connected, loved and treasured.
Supplementary Information

From: GRIFFITHS, Deb (WANGPP) <Deb.Griffiths@CORRECTIONS.GOV.T.NZ>
Sent: Wednesday, 4 July 2018 9:06 AM
To: 'Dennis Bourke' <bourke_d_teroti@hotmail.com>
Cc: COOK, Rene (WANGPP) <Rene.Cook@corrections.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: donation of books

Good Afternoon Diane

What a fabulously considered and generous proposal.

I can only say yes please. I will give some background for your meeting.

* I am an ex primary and secondary school Principal and have a huge commitment to education, literacy and numeracy improvement especially in this second chance environment
* Over 70% of our population do not have level 1 or 2 NZCEA ( School Cert / UE old talk! )
* 30% of our population read at or below step 2 ( about an 8 year old reading level )
* I have already ordered all of the Ready to Read series of books that children read in school from early emergent through to a 9 + year old reading age.
* I have downloaded all of the books in an audio format so the men can listen to how a story should sound, intonation and expression etc.
* I have purchased 2 Scarlett recording studios to record the stories onto a CD
* I see the Dad’s being able to read books at the age of their children, same as what they will be reading at home, and send the recording home on a CD
* This allows children to have Dad read a story to them and they read along with the books at home
* It is a highly motivating reason also for our low level readers to have the inspiration to learn to read at the same time
* We have two specific areas in the prison, high and low security and I want to have this programme we have named " Korero Puka Puka " Talking Books in both areas
* To achieve this we need 2 laptops that we can download the Scarlett recording data onto
* We have tried with an older laptop to get this operating, but it is not a current windows and won’t accept the programme

This is where we could really do with some assistance please. Would it be possible to have 2 laptops supplied to support this, as we do not have a budget that allows for this in our library area.

This would start a wonderful process we are set and ready to go with.
24th July 2018

St Vincent de Paul
Hawera

On behalf of Altrusa Hawera, I wish to request assistance in purchasing two laptops for the Whanganui Men’s Prison.

With the help of Laptops we would like to help connect families through reading books to their children from the confines of prison enabling the children to be a part of their lives in a positive way, and the prisoner to feel a sense of worth even though they are incarcerated.

This could inspire storytelling presentations for inmates and their children. The concept will also help with the literacy skills of the prisoners which on a whole are very poor.

We would like this to be a very important part of rehabilitating and connecting families, which could help with Breaking the Cycle of offending, self esteem and self worth.

Studies show that participation in storybook programs help keep families together and increases the chances of a parent staying at home once he or she is released from prison.

We will be doing some fundraising for this, but would be very appreciative of some support from St Vincent de Paul to help us out with this very worthy project.

Regards

Brenda Fleming
Service Committee Chairperson
St Vincent de Paul
243 High street
Hawera
14/8/18

Dear Members Of Altrusa,

St Vincent de Paul members congratulate you on your project providing books to the men’s prison in Wanganui and we have considered your request for assistance funding two laptops which will allow dads and grandads to read aloud onto a CD for their children to listen to in their homes.

Social Justice is a main focus for our Society and I am therefore delighted to inform you that we will be happy to allocate up to $2,000 for the purchase of two laptops.

Please supply us with your invoice when these have been purchased and we will be happy to reimburse you.

God bless you in your work,

Kind regards,

Diane Bourke
Secretary St Vincent de Paul Hawera
Inmates read to their kids

CATHERINE GROENESTEIN

A chance to read stories on a CD for their own children is helping men in prison improve their own reading ability.

Two community groups in Hawera have joined forces to provide a pile of books and two new laptops for recording stories to Whanganui Prison.

The project would help inspire men who were often poor readers to improve their skills, organiser Diane Bourke, who is president of Altrusa Hawera and secretary of the St Vincent de Paul Society, said.

"They have to learn how a story should sound - the intonation and expression - then they can make a CD and send it to their children."

Thirty per cent of prisoners had a reading level at or below step 2, 8-year-old level, and more than 70 per cent did not have level 1 or 2 NCEA.

The men at Whanganui Prison would be reading from the Ready to Read series that children around New Zealand used at school.

This would mean the children could listen to their father reading a story to them and they could read along with the books at home.

Bourke said the initiative came about after one of her two lawyer sons, Nathan Bourke, suggested it as a worthwhile project for Altrusa.

"Altrusa supports literacy initiatives but is not a fundraising organisation, but I'm also part of St Vincent de Paul, which raises money through its op shop, and they agreed to buy the laptops," she said.

The final piece of the puzzle was a computer shop, 4U Computer Solutions, which agreed to sell them two laptops at a very good price, she said.

The laptops and a pile of books for the prison library would be delivered this week.

"They have to learn how a story should sound - the intonation and expression - then they can make a CD and send it to their children."

Diana Bourke, Altrusa president
Hon Chester Borrows QSO
53 Whakamara Road
RD 12 Mokola
HAWERA 4672

14 February 2019

Mrs Diane Bourke
President Altrusa Hawera
22 Manawapou Road
HAWERA 4610

Dear Diane

PROVISION OF LEARNING MATERIALS TO WHANGANUI PRISON

I am writing because I have heard of the donations Altrusa has made to learning materials in Whanganui Prison recently. The provision of laptops, discs, books, magazines and jigsaw puzzles has been a wonderful thought and will have ongoing and tangible benefits into the future.

Over 80 per cent of inmates cannot read or do maths to their chronological age, yet when confined without distractions, inmates will apply themselves and reading levels increase. In many cases inmates are confined for up to 23 hours per day – yes this is New Zealand civil society and not the Eastern Blok Soviet Union – so the opportunity presented to read means that prisoners can focus on learning skills that will assist with reintegration. Maybe this assistance would be towards work, but even thinking about reading to a child, or resolving to live a crime free lifestyle on release. Those of us who read for pleasure do so because it opens our minds to other worlds beyond our immediate environment. So, it is the with confirmed prisoner, who may well be transported to some other helpful environment through imagination and the power of the written word.

In some prison’s inmates have read books onto CD’s that can be played to their children at home so the kids can hear dad reading them a bed time story. This may well be something that has never happened before and may put that parent’s relationship with his or her child on a whole new footing.

I am finding as Chair of Te Uepu Hapaitia – Minister Andrew Little’s Advisory Group for Justice Reform - that compassion and understanding are in short supply within the general public. To come across Altrusa’s donation towards these prisoners is something I want to acknowledge.

Thank you so much.

Yours sincerely

Chester Borrows
Donations from Altrusa International’s Hawera chapter to Whanganui Prison Library

1) Reading materials for the Library

Receiving donations for a Library collection can be somewhat hit-and-miss, however more than a third of the stock added to the Library during the past year has been from donations, so the Library remains heavily reliant on the goodwill of its generous donors.

Hawera’s Altrusa ladies, more than any other donors with whom the Librarian has liaised, have really taken the time to consider the specific needs of this Library’s clients. They (the donors) have understood the Collection Development criteria, and as a result the donations of books and magazines received from Altrusa have been really pertinent to the men’s needs, truly enhancing the collection of materials available for circulation.

For example: several borrowers have been working through the *Alex Rider* series by Anthony Horowitz, currently 11 titles long. Thanks to Altrusa donating several titles from this series last October, the Library has been better able to meet these readers’ demands, as they work through the series at different paces.

Another example: *Guinness World Records* books are an ever-popular diversion, an inimitable combination of picture, competition, and fact. The newest editions are designated “for library use only”, but Altrusa’s donation of a couple of older volumes in excellent condition enables some borrowers to spend more leisurely time perusing these resources.

2) Jigsaw puzzles

Whanganui Prison’s Library is a valuable source of information and entertainment for the site’s constantly fluctuating population of around 550 men. Not all of these men want to read, and many feel intimidated by books and/or libraries. The Library constantly strives to provide materials to meet the needs of all prisoners, whether fully literate or not.

Altrusa have donated around 50 jigsaw puzzles (mostly 1000- and 500-piece) to the Prison Library. This has “seeded” a new circulating collection, adding another whole section to the Library’s printed catalogue from which the clients make their requests (see attached sample).

It is the Librarian’s belief that the availability of jigsaws will encourage more people to make use of the Library, overcoming some of the barriers to Library use, and ultimately leading to some of these ‘reluctant readers’ borrowing graphic novels, magazines, or books.

3) Laptops – “Kōrero Pukapuka”

Other New Zealand prisons have successfully established programmes where volunteers record prisoners reading stories to their children, and the recordings are then sent to the children so they can hear dad or mum reading to them. Whanganui Prison has long wanted to engage our resident fathers in a similar programme, but sourcing suitable equipment has been challenging.

Altrusa’s bountiful donation (in conjunction with the St. Vincent de Paul Society) of two brand-new laptops and a large quantity of blank recording CDs overcomes a number of obstacles to this project. The prison is currently liaising with volunteers, who will soon be working with the fathers one-on-one to listen to expert readings of Ready-to-Read instructional texts, practise, and then record their own versions for their tamariki.