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TCAT Reads and Shares



BY PATTY POIST



TCAT is participating in the Ithaca City School District's Summer Read & Share Program by giving every district fifth grader a free summer fun pass to get them to Tompkins County Public Library or other places where they can curl up with a good book.

Created in 2005 by Dewitt Middle School teacher librarian Joanne Church, the program's aim is to teach students the importance of reading and the impact it has on their future success.

"There is documented evidence that students who do not read during the summer experience a significant loss of reading and language skills and recent studies suggest that this loss is significantly greater over time for students from lower-income families," Church said. "A major obstacle for this group of students to continue to read during the summer is a lack of access to free reading materials that match their reading levels and interests."

Church teamed up with TCAT in spring 2007 at which time TCAT donated one-day passes that would enable them to get to the library. In the subsequent years, TCAT provided summer fun passes. This year, TCAT donated 400 of the passes, each a \$50 value, that all ICSD fifth-graders can use to go anywhere in Tompkins County from July 1-Aug. 31.

In addition, ICSD middle school librarians, a Tompkins County Public Library youth services librarian and others have met with fifth-grade classes throughout the district to teach them the value of leisure reading and about summer reading program and activities available at the library. Students each received a free "high-interest" book thanks to a grant from Ithaca Public Education Initiative. Also, students were encouraged to write at least three reviews of reading material this summer in which they will be eligible to win prizes.

To give students a transit perspective, TCAT's Superintendent of Operations Charlie Brundza, TCAT intern Sydney Pearson and bus operator Randall Turner took a bus to Caroline Elementary School on Tuesday to offer about 50 students in the summer program some tips on how to use the TCAT system.

TCAT General Manager Joe Turcotte said the Summer Read & Share Program, in turn, gives TCAT an opportunity to teach young people about the ease, safety and convenience of using the bus system.

"It not only helps them build confidence, but shows them how valuable public transportation can be throughout their lives," Turcotte said. "With this program, we are essentially recruiting a future customer base."

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