Cargill/ALA Partnership for Family Literacy names outstanding projects

Twenty outstanding family literacy projects are the recipients of 1993 Cargill Cares Awards from the Cargill/American Library Association (ALA) Partnership for Family Literacy program.

Included are: Amboy, Calif., where the Twentynine Palms Library worked with their local literacy council to expand English as a second language (ESL) programs for employees at the Cargill Salt facility; Sikeston, Mo., where several Cargill grain facilities raised more than $4,000 for eight elementary schools and the local literacy council, and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where three Cargill locations joined with the Cedar Rapids Public Library and Head Start to develop a family literacy program that has expanded to day care centers throughout the city. (A complete listing of family literacy project winners is attached.)

"Two things stand out about this family literacy partnership with the ALA: the enthusiasm for family literacy programs in communities around the world and the innovation of so many different projects," said Bill Fielding, chairman of the Cargill Cares initiative. "We asked Cargill employees to get involved and to do what made sense in their own communities and their response has been tremendous. What has started here will be ongoing...it's not just a one year project, but will continue for a long time and grow on its own."

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According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the literacy gap coincides with the rising worldwide need for workers who not only read and write, but are able to learn new skills in a rapidly changing work environment.

In 1992, Cargill's network of community service programs, Cargill Cares established a partnership with ALA to address the issues that impact adults and children with limited reading skills. The Partners for Family Literacy Project encourages the development of community partnerships among Cargill locations, public libraries, literacy providers and other community organizations.

The programs include tutor training, employees volunteering to tutor adults, family story times, fund-raising projects, ESL programs, volunteer readers for children, work place literacy and many other activities that encourage parents and children to spend time together and develop a love of reading.

"It was good to have a private sector know-how on our project team," said Jan Pease from the Litchfield (Minn.) Public Library. "We made a stronger effort to be more visible with our PR."

"Working with the people in the library gave me better insight into what they were doing," Bill Martens, Cargill's Litchfield Grain facility manager added. "This program drew a lot of attention to the literacy problem and that created a need to get a program established."

More than 150 projects have been developed since the Cargill/ALA Family Literacy Project began in 1992. According to Margaret Monsour of the ALA Office for Library Outreach Services (OLOS), many of the models can be replicated in other locations to build and expand a network of family literacy programs.
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The 1993 projects will be recognized at an Awards Ceremony at the family literacy preconference on Thursday, June 24, during the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans.

Established in 1876, the ALA is the oldest and largest library association in the world. Its 56,000 members include librarians, libraries, publishers, authors, public library trustees and friends of libraries. ALA founded the Coalition for Literacy.

Cargill is based in Minnetonka, Minn., and is a privately held merchandiser, processor, transporter and warehouser of agricultural and other bulk commodities. The company employs more than 67,000 individuals in 58 countries worldwide.

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