Group Goals and Alternatives to Prizes in Your Summer Reading Program

What: Add a charitable aspect to your summer reading program

Why: Children and especially teens love to feel part of something larger. To feel that they're making a difference in the world. Parents like the fact that kids are doing something for the greater good and they aren't dealing with more tiny plastic toys.

How:

1. Choose a charity. Be sure it has a broad support: some relationship to literacy (such as Ethiopia Reads), a relationship to current events (like earthquake relief) or a generally recognized good cause (like Heifer International). *Check the website Charity Navigator <http://www.charitynavigator.org/> to be sure that the charity is sound and making efficient use of donations.* Someone may ask why you chose this charity, and you want to have you answers ready.

2. Decide how to implement the charity aspect. Some possibilities:

   - For every hour read, Friends donate $X to charity of choice

   - For every hour read, a business you have cultivated as a sponsor donates $X to charity of choice

   - Set a group goal: if all kids (or teens, or kids and teens, or kids, teens, and adults) read X hours over the summer, then the Friends will donate $X to charity of choice (or if it's Heifer International, purchase a goat/pig/water buffalo – "Kids read for kids,")

   - Give out "book bucks." The child or teen can either use the book bucks earned to buy prizes, or drop them into a jar for your charity. The bucks in the charity jar will be converted to cash (by the Friends or by the library) and sent to the charity. (You will be spending less money on prizes this way . . . so money set aside for prizes and not used could be sent to the charity.)

- Put out a penny collection bowl for the charity, and ask children to put in pennies for every book read. The library or Friends might offer to match the final amount.

Here is some information from libraries that do charity alternatives:

http://www.waukesha.lib.wi.us/kc/programs.shtml

http://www.stoningtonfreelibrary.org/kids/programs/heifer.html

http://www.nmrls.org/news/apr09/ys.shtml

Here are some charities mentioned:

Ethiopia Reads – http://www.ethiopiareads.org/

Heifer International - http://www.heifer.org/

IBBY Children in Crisis Fund - http://www.usbby.org/ ; http://www.usbby.org/opportunities.htm; http://www.ibby.org/index.php?id=813

What: Add a group goal to your program

Why: Create buzz, use as an alternative or addition to other prizes.

How: Simply set a goal for the entire club, rather than individuals. If all participants read X, then Y.

Your Y is whatever will motivate readers: someone well-known in the community or library dyes their hair pink, shaves their head, sleeps on the roof, kisses a pig, dresses as a cow five days in a row, etc.

Or your Y may be that the Friends or area business you have cultivated will donate $X to be used for more youth materials (especially "hot" materials like graphic novels, anime, games, etc.)