

Dear Friend:

Do you remember when you first discovered the joy of reading? Perhaps you were six or seven when you were able to understand that words on the page could grow into sentences and sentences could grow into stories. What a quantum leap that was for you! Now there were characters you knew and cared about, new places to get to know, ideas of your own that grew from an author's suggestion. When you first discovered reading, a whole new world opened up to you.

Shouldn't that world be open to all children? The Friends and Foundation of the San Francisco Public Library believes so. We work to help the children in this city love reading the way you and I do. As if the delight of reading weren't enough, when we give our children a chance to read, we give them one of the most important tools for life they'll ever need.

That's why we have funded the Children's Summer Reading Program at every branch library in San Francisco. During the summer months, the program uses an incentive system to reward children for continuing to read. Our primary goals are:

- To encourage reading skill development over the summer months. This is especially crucial in grades 1-3, where children can lose up to four months of reading skills over the summer.
- To provide a variety of fun, free educational activities that serve poor neighborhoods throughout the city.
- To build relationships between children, families, neighborhoods and the library.

If you asked children why they participate in the Children's Summer Reading Program, they'd probably answer that they're trying to earn free tickets to local events such as Giants games. That's fine with us. But more encouraging is some of the feedback we're getting from their parents. As one mother wrote us:

*"Motivated by the prizes in the program, my son has taken his first step on the lifelong journey of reading for the love of it. What once was a battle to get him to read has turned into two, sometimes three reading sessions a day. It makes my heart sing when he asks if he can please stay up past his 'lights out' curfew to read another chapter . . . I am encouraged because he talks about characters as if they were friends. He even looks for these characters when choosing his next book."*

The summer reading program is a vital community resource promoting literacy, supporting schools, and providing positive activities for children throughout the city. In 1998, the program served 10,635 children under the age of 13.

In addition, a program called "Kid Power" provides opportunities for students, ages 10-16, to assist with the summer reading program. Last year, nearly 500 youth

volunteered over 8,000 hours by helping to register participants, set up programs and support library staff throughout the city. The lessons they learned about helping others were invaluable.

I'm writing to ask you to give to the Friends and Foundation of the San Francisco Public Library, so that we can continue to sponsor such worthy endeavors as the Children's Summer Reading Program.

Of course, children aren't the only people who benefit from our efforts. Project Read, initiated and sponsored by the Friends and Foundation of the San Francisco Public Library, has been helping adults learn to read since 1983. Dozens of other library activities touch the lives of thousands of San Franciscans every year. Among these programs are:

*Bookmobile:* The Friends purchased a Bookmobile in 1971 to serve isolated older adults in underserved and economically disadvantaged communities of the city. After two decades of heavy service took its toll, the original vehicle was retired, and the Friends raised over \$200,000 to purchase and outfit a new Bookmobile in 1990.

*Black Oral History Project: Blacks in San Francisco Prior to 1945:* Jointly sponsored by the Friends and the San Francisco African-American Historical and Cultural Society, the project produced tape recordings and transcripts of an important story that otherwise might not have been told.

*Friends for Life:* Volunteers are trained to bring library services and books to homebound people with AIDS.

What makes San Francisco so special – cultural diversity, unique neighborhoods, a solid sense of community – are part and parcel of our public library system. Community library programs like the ones I've described in this letter are what make San Francisco a world-class cultural center.

Won't you please give generously to the Friends and Foundation of the San Francisco Public Library? When you do, you can know that you've done much more than help a child discover the joy of reading. You've contributed to the vitality of the city and community itself.

Sincerely,

*"Thank you for truly sparking my first-grader's interest in reading!"*

**YES**, I support the Children's Summer Reading Program and other important community library programs. Here is my donation to the Friends and Foundation of the San Francisco Public Library.

Enclosed is:

- \$50
- \$100
- \$250
- \$500
- Other \$ \_\_\_\_

Payment method:

- Check enclosed
- Please bill my
  - American Express
  - Discover
  - Mastercard
  - Visa

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Card #

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Exp. Date

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Cardholder signature

Thank you!