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SUCCESS FOR SMALL LIBRARIES

A local awareness campaign can benefit any public library—regardless of size, location or budget. The Advocacy in Action framework is easy to implement and has been used in many small communities. Advertising helps get the word out quickly, but if you have little or no available budget, you can still run a very successful campaign. Your desire to raise awareness, your knowledge of the community, and your commitment of time and staff, are the most important assets of your campaign. Only you understand what your community will respond to and what resonates with residents in your area.

Give staff ownership.

Your staff (which may be just you!) is the foundation of your campaign and key to starting a local buzz. Help staff speak confidently about your campaign and empower them to contribute their own ideas to campaign efforts.

Mobilize volunteers.

Volunteers and library support organizations, such as Friends of the Library groups, make wonderful campaign resources. Brainstorm activities, events and partnerships with your volunteers. Think about all of the possible groups in your community that can help, including retirees, teen groups, local students and your board members.

Develop community partnerships. Invite local businesses and organizations to learn more about the campaign and partner with you in building awareness. Tell them about the community aspect of your campaign, and the tremendous value the library brings to their clients and customers. Make sure to:

- Provide information needed to answer questions and keep community partners updated with any news.
- Discuss promotional partnerships and if they would consider using campaign components in advertising or other communication vehicles.
- Create custom campaign posters that reflect each specific organization or business.

Get local schools involved.

Meet with teachers and administrators to explain the campaign and offer simple suggestions for how to include all students and staff. Engaging students will bring attention and interest, and adds to community ownership of the campaign. When working with the schools, it's important to gain permission to send material home to parents, as well as to attend school activities, such as sporting events, school fairs or festivals.

Get your campaign out into the community.

Events are a critical component of building campaign awareness. This is your opportunity to get involved with events where the library is an unexpected presence. Surprise your community and they will take notice.

Negotiate advertising and promotions.

Talk to local media about the value of your library to the community. In many cases you can negotiate discounts, and the media outlet may even provide free options, such as online or special section ads, and opportunities for other kinds of promotions, like feature stories and sponsorships.

Consider alternatives to print advertising.

There are many possibilities for advertising and promotion, and the Advocacy in Action resources and tools can help you. For example, you can contact local radio and TV stations to ask if you can run library ads as public service announcements. You may also want to consider web site, billboard or bus shelter advertising. And don't forget promotional partnerships.