

Wish Tree Activity

As one way of reaching out and hearing from a wide-range of people in their community, the Columbus (WI) Public Library conducted a creative "Root for Columbus" campaign. Following advice to make their community engagement efforts visible and fun, they came up with the idea of creating their own version of a **wish tree**.



Traveling throughout the community, they started with a large bare tree branch in a visible space—at local elementary schools, a gas station, bank lobby, coffee shop, local hospital, etc. They offered colorful paper leaves to allow anyone who encountered this tree to write a response to the brief question: **"What kind of community do you want?"**

Through this effort, they received 400 to 500 leaves with responses answering this participatory question. This is a good strategy for hearing from people outside of the library.

As leaves began to sprout onto this traveling tree, they started getting press, spreading the word about this important question and fun way for the community to engage. They also began to see some statistical information—the number of leaves made it easy to identify themes and quantify the number of responses of what people thought in response to this question!

From the WebJunction webinar [Engaged Planning: Ask What You Can Do For Your Rural Community](#), with Cindy Fesemyer, Director, [Columbus \(WI\) Public Library](#)

