

Pueblo's \$1 Million Reading Challenge kicks off

PUEBLO, Colo. — Pueblo County youth have the chance to earn \$100 this summer by reading. Thanks to \$1 million in funding from the City of Pueblo and Pueblo County, Pueblo City-County Library District is offering area youth the chance to take part in Reading Pays: Pueblo's \$1 Million Reading Challenge.

The challenge starts June 1 and runs through August 31. It is open to Pueblo County youth between ages 0 to 17 who have a valid PCCLD library card or ConnectEd account. To register for the program, participants can go to www.pueblolibrary.org/readingpays. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis and is limited to the first 3,000 participants each month of the program – June, July and August.

The \$1 million funding is part of the American Rescue Plan to help Pueblo rebound from the effects of COVID-19. All funds will directly impact area youth, the library district will not keep any of the funds for administrative fees.

"The \$1 Million Pueblo Summer Reading Challenge is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity made possible by federal American Rescue Plan funds. The 2021 American Rescue Plan is a \$1.9 trillion national coronavirus rescue package intended to facilitate the United States' recovery from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic," said PCCLD Executive Director Jon Walker.

To earn the \$100, participants must check out 10 items in person from any PCCLD location or download items from the library's online catalog. They then must provide a response by writing, drawing or filming a video in response to what they read, listened to or watched. All responses are submitted online to www.pueblolibrary.org/readingpays.

To continue participating during the summer, youth must re-register for each month of the program's duration. Only one registration, and only one completion form per participant will be accepted each month of the program. To receive their \$100, participants can opt to create a savings account at Bank of the San Juans or request a cash voucher.

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According to Pueblo Mayor Nick Gradisar, "The Reading Pays program has multiple purposes. Our intent first and foremost is to help bridge some of the educational gap that exists from the last school year dealing with COVID-19. Reading is the key to lifelong learning and we want those skills developed early. It is also a great way to introduce young people to the concept of bank accounts and the value of savings. The added bonus is that it's a stimulus for the economy."

Community partners in the Reading Pays program include the city and county of Pueblo, the library district, Bank of the San Juans and EPIC of Pueblo.

"We are enthused to partner with the city on this important project that promotes reading and financial literacy in the community during the summer," said Pueblo County Commissioner Garrison Ortiz.

In addition to earning the \$100, participants can take home books donated by EPIC of Pueblo. The organization donated 9,000 books to the library district in support of Reading Pays.

Walker added, ". . . I am pleased the Pueblo City-County Library can assist in this in partnership with the City of Pueblo, Pueblo County, both local school districts, EPIC-Pueblo, and a number of other local public and private organizations.

To learn more about PCCLD, visit www.pueblolibrary.org. To get a library card, visit any PCCLD location.

<https://www.pueblolibrary.org/ReadingPaysPressRelease>