

# STAFF REPORT

## City of Lancaster

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Date: November 13, 2012

To: Mayor Parris and City Council Members

From: Ronda Perez, Director, Parks, Recreation and Arts Department

Subject: **Lancaster Reads! Program**

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### **Recommendation:**

Implement the Lancaster Reads! Program designed to promote reading and literacy as well as foster a sense of community through the shared experiences of reading and talking together.

### **Fiscal Impact:**

Estimated \$2,000.00-\$3,000.00 annually.

### **Background:**

As directed by the City Council at its October 23, 2012 meeting, staff proposes that the City of Lancaster join a growing nationwide reading program, which adopts the idea of a localized book discussion club and expands it citywide. The idea that originated in Seattle in 1998 has quickly spread across the United States and is currently present in at least 35 different cities.

If approved by Council, the City of Lancaster, in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Public Library in Lancaster, will announce the first in an ongoing series of quarterly book selections this month. The residents of Lancaster will have until the end of March to complete the first book.

A new book will be chosen each quarter, with the title being decided upon by City and Library staff or recommendations made by the public. Each quarter after the book is chosen, the City of Lancaster will make the title and locations to purchase/borrow the book accessible to the community through the City's website, the Los Angeles County Public Library in Lancaster, community groups, local schools and colleges. At the end of each quarter, a discussion forum will be held to celebrate literacy. When possible, the author of the book will be invited to come for a special presentation. If a movie has been made from the book, it will be included as part of the culminating event and a dialogue will be held to compare and contrast the differences between the two.

A page on the City website will be created each quarter with information regarding the book, author and also will include a toolkit for patrons interested in leading smaller discussion groups on their own within the community. The toolkit will include: the historical context of the book, discussion questions and activities, reviews, and recommended resources. A community calendar detailing discussion forum dates and future book selections will be created for individuals interested in participating in the program.

**Criteria for selection include:**

- The book shall appeal to a wide range of patrons: women, men, teens, readers, non-readers, and so forth. The broader the appeal, the richer the discussion.
- The book shall have enough substance that it lends itself to a variety of programming possibilities.
- The book shall be available in paperback and several other formats such as an e-book, in Spanish, as a CD (audiobook), and in large type.

**Financial Partnerships**

Financial partnerships to help support the Lancaster Reads! Program will be sought out in the following areas: grants, corporate sponsors, local book stores and community groups.

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