

Mayor Watts featured on Library READ poster

By Melanie Houlden.

Surrey Libraries has launched its first READ poster, in support of the City of Surrey's Learning for Life Strategy and Family Literacy Day, which took place on January 27th. The poster features Mayor Dianne Watts reading the Dalai Lama's *The Art of Happiness*.



CITY OF SURREY
LEARNING FOR LIFE



Surrey Mayor Dianne Watts promotes reading in the first of a new poster series.

"Literacy is an essential component to a healthy, productive and vibrant community. It is one of the most significant indicators of an individual's overall well-being and capacity to succeed. We want to

improve literacy rates in our city and encourage parents to start reading to their children at a very early age," said Mayor Watts. "Books inspire people and encourage creativity. And, our libraries are a wonderful place to connect with the community and access a world of information and resources."

The City's Learning for Life Strategy was implemented in 2008 and outlines a clear set of recommendations to improve literacy in Surrey. The recommendations are built around five themes: early learning; the middle and teen years; adult and workplace learning; community and interpersonal learning, and personal development and lifelong learning. Some of the new initiatives include:

- Library workshops for early childhood educators help to build skills related to the use of stories for building language skills in young children.
- Library storytimes conducted in Punjabi or Mandarin and English help parents and caregivers learn about the importance of early literacy while their children experience the magic of storytelling.
- Surrey Libraries staff worked with Surrey School District's Welcome Centre to develop reading kits for settlement workers to use with new Canadian families to encourage literacy.
- Surrey businesses are becoming more aware of the importance of literacy through collaboration among literacy providers and the Surrey Board of Trade.
- New City and Library websites include translation software to make services more accessible to citizens whose first language is not English.
- Community and Leisure Services and the Surrey Libraries offer a variety of computer learning opportunities, both free and for reasonable fees.
- Seniors are becoming aware of services and learning opportunities through a series of forums sponsored by the City.

The strategy was developed and implemented with a number of key partners including School District 36, the City of Surrey, the Office of Early Childhood Education,

Learning and Care, the Surrey Public Library and a variety of community agencies involved in literacy programs.

“Surrey is building for the future, not only with physical infrastructure such as the City Centre Library but also with expanded learning opportunities for people of all ages, and Surrey Libraries are proud to be leading the way in carrying out the Learning for Life Strategy,” said Chief Librarian Beth Barlow. “The future truly does live in Surrey.”

The READ campaign was developed by the American Library Association and uses celebrities to

promote literacy and encourage people of all ages to read. The Surrey Libraries' READ campaign includes a bookmark featuring Mayor Watts and will expand to include other prominent residents in the future.

For more information on Surrey's Learning for Life Strategy go to:

<http://www.surreylibraries.ca/files/CityofSurreyLiteracyPlan-web.pdf>

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