

## **Let the Games (and Teen Activities) Begin**

### **Scenic Regional Library Launches Twice-Monthly Teen Programming**

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**Let the Games (and Teen Activities) Begin** By Karen Cernich, Features Editor

Teens get your game face on. Beginning in October, Scenic Regional Library in Union will offer twice-monthly programming just for you (sixth-graders and older).

On the second Tuesday of every month, the library will have a teen-specific topic for discussion. These are topics that teens, overall, have expressed a high interest in, said Christy Schink, children's librarian at the Scenic branch in Union.

The first program, set for Tuesday, Oct. 8, from 4 to 5 p.m., will focus on ghost stories. Steven LaChance, author of a book about a haunted house in Union and founder of the Missouri Paranormal Research (now Paranormal Task Force), will talk about his experiences.

In November, the program being held Tuesday, Nov. 12, will feature skateboarding.

The first part of the program will include watching a 30-minute movie about skateboarding, followed by discussion with local skateboarders (one who skates in the X Games) and a skate shop owner, as well as some police officers.

This is a big issue right now in Union, where skateboarding has been outlawed anywhere, said Schink.

Although she hasn't decided what movie will be featured, Schink said she would like to be able to show one about Love Park, a famous skateboarding park in Philadelphia, where skateboarding was once outlawed and police officers were taking away kids' skateboards. The movie includes that history as well as how an advocacy group rose up to get skateboarding legalized again and get Love Park opened again for skateboarding.

The movie features great skateboarding footage and detailed history, and the town's experience with outlawing the sport is especially timely. There is, however, some foul language in it, so Schink is trying to have those words edited out so the movie can be shown.

Then in December, Schink is planning more of a craft activity — she'll have teens making gift jars of things like seasoning, hot cocoa, cookies . . . and then have them decorate the jars.

The idea here is that the teens will have a gift to give someone for Christmas, said Schink.

All of the supplies will be provided, and there won't be any charge for the teens. There also is no registration necessary.

Future topic ideas include showing an interactive movie and something to do with writing.

In addition to these monthly topics for teens, Scenic will be offering a monthly gaming event on the fourth Tuesdays from 3 to 5 p.m. This is designed as a drop-in program where teens can show up at any time, said Schink.

There will be a variety of games available for teens to play, including digital games (on the Wii system), board games, even card games. There also will be a featured game each month.

Schink, who has held gaming programs as part of the summer reading program, is always surprised by the number of teens who gravitate to the board and card games over the digital ones. It's no secret how much teens love playing digital games, she said, but given the choice at these interactive events, they tend to opt for the more traditional games.

"I'm surprised at how they step away from the video games when they see the board games and come over and play," said Schink, noting one of the more popular games is Ticket to Ride, a board game where players draw cards to find out their destination (from Los Angeles to New York or Kansas City to Miami, for example) and then have to build trains to get there.

"It's very educational, but very fun," Schink remarked.

The card game Get Bit is a favorite too, she said. Players compete to stay alive as others are eaten by a shark.

Then there's a life-sized Clue game.

Schink said there's no limit to the types of games that can be offered at the monthly program. She has a variety of games in stock at the library, but if she needs fresh ideas, she can get help from the Social Competitive Gaming Network (SCGN) in Washington. Located in the building behind Sonic on Fifth Street, SCGN has a huge game library and is staffed six days a week (Tuesdays through Sundays) by enthusiastic gamers.

### **Community Request**

Schink had already been planning to hold regular monthly game programs at the library when she received a call in August from Bob Gross at Preferred Family Healthcare (PFH) in Union.

PFH is a comprehensive behavioral health nonprofit organization that provides substance abuse treatment, prevention and mental health services throughout Missouri and Kansas.

In Union, PFH offers three programs for adolescents:

A substance abuse outpatient treatment for ages 12 to 17;

Team of Concern, a preventative and early-intervention program for middle- to high-school age youth who are at-risk for developing substance or alcohol abuse because they are in an environment that puts them at risk; and

ART-C, or Achieving Recovery Through Creativity, which is offered to any of the PFH clients. Teens work on various art projects as a means of expressing their feelings.

Gross, who works as a community support specialist for PFH, helps clients with school-related issues, finding positive activities, even career research. He reads The Missourian each week looking for positive activities for teens — things like an astronomy viewing at East Central College and local fairs. He has taken clients to places like Astral Glass in New Haven to watch glassblowers at work, to a Rams practice or a hockey practice in St. Louis and to The Moving Wall in Washington.

"I look for anything positive that will get them interested and keep them out of trouble," said Gross, maybe even spark an idea of something they would like to do themselves or a possible career.

When Gross contacted Schink about offering more teen programs in Union, he already had compiled a list of teen interests (using a survey PFH has clients complete), so Schink used that as a jumping off point in creating the monthly teen activity night.

Initial plans are to offer these twice-monthly teen programs for six months (October to March) to gauge how much interest there is, and then determine if they should continue.

And if it's successful, Schink said she will talk to staff at other Scenic locations to see about offering similar programs at their branches as well.

Already a couple of locations are doing just that, though. Scenic branches in both Hermann and Pacific have launched their own teen book clubs.

Dates and details are available at the Scenic website, <http://scenicregional.org>.

### **Benefits to Gaming**

While some parents may roll their eyes at the thought of encouraging their kids to play games after school, preferring them to study maybe, Schink says that, believe it or not, there are educational benefits to gaming, especially when it's done in a social environment.

In fact, the gaming program that will be offered at the library checks off several of the "40 developmental assets" found in a study by Search Institute to be positive success indicators for kids.

"Positive adult interaction, relationships with adults, relationships with other kids and reading are all on the list," said Schink.

To see the list of 40 assets, visit [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).

"(The library) is also just a safe, positive environment to be in and to get out in," said Schink. "Often they are gaming at home by themselves, and even if they are doing the same games as they would at home, being in the same room with other people will be a positive social interaction.

"Plus, a lot of the games themselves are plain educational. Ticket to Ride, you can learn a lot about geography."

Schink also plans to tie in reading as much as possible. She will have a book display set up each month and will encourage the teens in the direction of reading as much as possible.