

New campaign paints town yellow to Get Hackney Reading

Submitted by: Kayak PR

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A new community-wide campaign to inspire people to read has been launched in Hackney. 'Words Unite' aims to Get Hackney Reading by encouraging people to become enthusiastic, independent and inquiring readers.

The borough-wide campaign is led by The Learning Trust and funded by Team Hackney, its local strategic partnership. The overarching aim is to improve literacy levels across the borough and encourage more people to read for pleasure and enjoyment.

The campaign will include a fun packed schedule of reading activities, initiatives and events run by schools, community and volunteer groups, libraries and adult education centres. A Words Unite advertising campaign and a new website (www.gethackneyreading.com) have been developed together with marketing agency mabox.

'Words Unite' funding is being awarded to community and voluntary organisations to fund creative and informal activities for engaging children, young people and adults in reading activities.

A wide-ranging marketing campaign will be complemented by community-wide activity in schools, libraries and the community and voluntary sector. Using the slogan "Words Unite", a distinctive and easy-to-use promotional toolkit has been produced, complete with poster and leaflet templates, advice on running events, and order forms for the purchase of promotional materials such as pens, badges, and bags.

On 6 September 2007, schools, libraries and other interested partners were treated to an exclusive preview of the campaign, and invited to contribute ideas as to how the campaign can be delivered at local level.

Councillor Rita Krishna, cabinet member and chair of Team Hackney's Children and Young Peoples' partnership, said: "Being able to read is fundamental to being able to live well in the twenty-first century – and it is our shared responsibility to create conditions which enable anyone who cannot yet read to acquire the skill. Reading means more choices for education and employment, but is also life-enhancing in and of itself. No one should be denied the opportunity to learn."

Alan Wood, Director of Children's Services and CEO of The Learning Trust said: "Words Unite is a hugely exciting and important campaign for Hackney as the social and economic benefits of reading are indisputable. The campaign will bring the community together in the shared goal of inspiring everyone to read more. Many excellent reading initiatives are already taking place in schools, libraries and adult learning centres throughout Hackney to improve literacy, but with this additional support we can add to this and really make an impact."

According to 'The London Strategic Action Plan for Skills for Life,' published in 2006, the need to

improve literacy, numeracy and key skills is greater in Hackney than any other borough, with many pupils performing below the national average in reading and the associated skills. Improving these skills and building on the work that is already being done in Hackney to improve key skills will be a key priority of the campaign.

An up to date list of Words Unite events as well as everything you need to know about the campaign can be found at www.gethackneyreading.com from 14th September 2007.

The 'Words Unite' campaign kicks off Saturday 6 October at the Hackney Town Hall Square at 12:30pm in conjunction with Family Learning Week 6-14 October. People will have a chance to take part in many events throughout the day, including 'Word on the street' – a giant word game and Word Up, a Countdown style game Bollywood belly dancing, Carribean story-telling and much more.

For more information, additional photos or comment:

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Notes to the Editors:

The Learning Trust is the not-for-profit company which runs all the education services for the London Borough of Hackney www.learningtrust.co.uk.

Team Hackney is Hackney's strategic partnership which is dedicated to improving the quality of life for everyone in the borough by bringing together the different parts of the public private, community and voluntary sectors www.teamhackney.org.

About Words Unite – Get Hackney Reading:

Words Unite is a community-wide campaign to Get Hackney Reading. The year-long project aims to encourage adults, children and young people throughout the borough to become enthusiastic, independent and inquiring readers. It's all about inspiring people to read more, to read together with family and friends and to enjoy all the different ways of reading.

The campaign goal is for people in Hackney to:

- have good reading skills, which will help them to achieve economic well-being
- use their reading skills to access information and increase their knowledge
- have a culturally rich experience through reading
- read for pleasure and enjoyment

The campaign is being led by The Learning Trust, the not-for-profit organisation, which runs all the education services for the London Borough of Hackney and is responsible for Hackney schools, day nurseries, play services and adult education. The campaign is funded by Team Hackney and involves schools, community groups, libraries, voluntary organisations and local community representatives.

In Hackney, the need to improve literacy, numeracy and key skills is greater than in any other London borough. (The London Strategic Action Plan for Skills for Life in London, 2006.)

- Many pupils in Hackney's schools perform below the national average in reading and the associated skills
- Hackney is the lowest performing local authority in the country in terms of reading and writing
- Almost half of all adults in Hackney have a lower level of literacy than that expected of a school leaver
- Hackney's employment rate is 55%, some 13.6% percent lower than that of the wider London economy, which is currently 69.1%

By looking at reading, we can also tackle some of Hackney's key priorities contained in the Local Area Agreement plan which are:

- Successfully tackling educational under achievement
- Reducing unemployment for 18 – 24 year olds
- Increasing access to low cost home ownership
- Reducing the rate of violent crime and criminal gang culture
- Reducing health inequalities for children and young people