

Atchison Public Offers Outreach to Juvenile Correctional Facility

by Anne Eggers, Young Adult Consultant, Atchison Public Library

My involvement with the Atchison Juvenile Correctional Facility (AJCF) began when I agreed to be a reader for their celebration of Read Across America in 2005.

Not knowing what to expect, I chose to read *Horton Hatches the Egg* because I thought the young men would appreciate the story of Horton and his struggles.

When I finished reading (it was much too short), I said good-bye and departed, not realizing this was the beginning of an interesting and challenging relationship.

The following year I again received a request to be a participant in Read Across America. I planned for a more interesting and rewarding performance for my listeners—nothing too short.

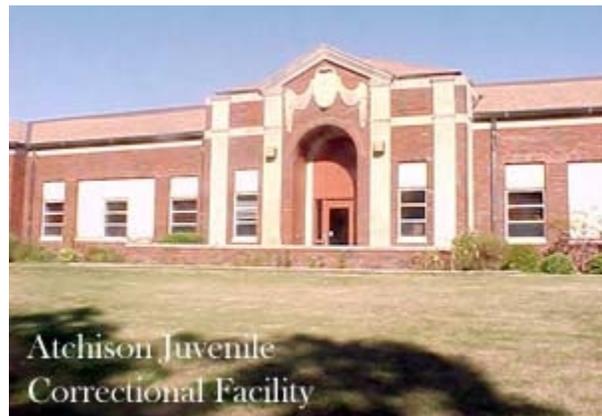
Again I used a Dr. Seuss book—*Rumpelstiltskin*, but this time I had the students read the parts and provide some sound effects. This was beginning to be lots of fun!

Before I left, I visited with the teacher who was the organizer of the event. When she spoke of an interest in future library events for her students, I mentioned “One City, One Book” which was planned for the next month. We were reading *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park.

Plans were made for students who wished to participate in the program to read the book and meet with me as a discussion leader provided by the library. From this initial meeting, a regular book discussion group has grown which meets once a quarter, including summer, and has more than eight members.

This summer I made the suggestion that the young men might like to take part in our Summer Reading Program. Even though classes continue to meet in the summer, Fridays were free days. So there was plenty of down time just perfect for reading. And did they read! Forty-nine boys signed up to read at least one book. Forty of them continued to read and their total was 438 books. The winner of an MP3 player, our summer reading grand prize, came from this group of boys. He was so excited when his name was called as the winner that he was shaking.

Each year we kick off the Summer Reading Program with a Monopoly tournament. Since the AJCF boys could not attend, we decided to take a tournament to them. On a hot day in July, seven adults and



nineteen boys gathered to monitor and play Monopoly. What a treat! Some of them had never played the game before.

This month, Camp Create Chaos will make its appearance on their campus. Plans for this event include making marbled paper, creating photos with light, making a permanent rainbow, building a magnetic car plus one or two other activities.

Working with these young men has been a rewarding experience for me. I have made many friends who are very appreciative of the attention they have received. Be careful if you try a similar program. You'll be hooked!