

**THE BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY (B&ECPL) SYSTEM:
Relevant and Essential to Our Community
Advocacy Talking Points-2008**

- Entrepreneurs and small businesses increasingly are becoming the lifeblood of our Western New York economy. This year more than 3,000 entrepreneurs will start businesses in Erie County.
- Many of these businesspeople depend on the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) System as they plan their businesses, seek out financial resources and ultimately increase employment and prosperity in the community.
- The Library System offers fast, guided access to a wide variety of pertinent, up-to-date information to assist them in achieving success.
- Business information is available on-demand through the Library's free online resources. Its business collection of more than 2,000 items is rated one of the best in New York State.
- The Library's subscription databases such as "ReferenceUSA" offer up-to-the-minute statistics on 12 million businesses nationwide. Each database can cost upwards of \$10,000—too much for most small businesses.
- In addition to personal reference assistance and online connections to business resources, the Library hosts an ongoing series of business basic workshops covering such topics as writing a business plan, creating a marketing plan and legal issues associated with starting a business.
- The B&ECPL actively partners with the Small Business Administration (SBA), Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), Buffalo/Niagara Partnership, Erie County Industrial Development Agency, (ECIDA), other area business associations, government agencies and colleges and universities to provide program coordination and networking services.
- The Library's Small Business Outreach Program, designed to foster economic development in Erie County, has:
 - More than doubled the number of on-site and off-site visits to promote library resources available to entrepreneurs (23 in 2004 to 48 in 2006)
 - Nearly tripled its in-depth business planning and management programming (5 in 2005 to 14 in the first nine months of 2007)
 - Quadrupled the number of business associations, government agencies and colleges and universities in its partners network (3 in 2005 to 12 in 2007)

- Children are this community's future leaders and workforce. The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) System offers a wide variety of programming that gives young people the skills to read, to understand and to become informed, dependable employees and productive citizens.
- The Library System has assumed an active and leading role in major community initiatives to tackle the serious literacy problem in Erie County (one in five county residents is functionally illiterate, meaning they can't read beyond a 5th grade level, and in the City of Buffalo, the percentage is nearly one-third).
- Early childhood literacy development support is provided through Buffalo Preschool CARE (Community Action for Reading Excellence). The needs of school-aged children are being addressed through the citywide *Buffalo Reads* initiative. The Library's East Delevan branch is a key player in a pilot program that approaches the issue of literacy in the 14215 Buffalo zip code in an integrative manner.
- Providing productive activities for teens in a safe and inviting environment is a top priority for the B&ECPL. *Get Graphic*, a family literacy initiative funded through a major grant from the New York State Department of Education, challenges teens to engage their minds and learn in non-traditional ways.
- The Library System offers a wide variety of online services to youth to assist them in completing homework assignments and reports. It also provides librarian-recommended books, by both grade level and topic, and summer reading lists.
- Youth programming is an essential part of the Library's mission and it fulfills its charge by giving children and teens a range of activities from story-telling and games and crafts to reading competitions (e.g., the annual Battle of the Books) and special events to commemorate the newest Harry Potter book release or Children's Book Week. In 2006, more than 81,000 youngsters ages 4 to 17 participated in B&ECPL educational activities.
- Collaborations with well-respected cultural organizations such as Explore & More: A Children's Museum and the Buffalo Museum of Science expand the Library's ability to deliver innovative educational programming to youngsters throughout the County.
- The unemployed and underemployed in Erie County turn to the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) System for programs and resources to prepare themselves for the workforce and to find employment.

- The Library provides free access to technology and computer instruction that allow job-seekers of all ages to learn basic skills, thereby increasing their value to prospective employers. Patrons are also provided the opportunity to apply for jobs online—a growing trend—and to create free e-mail accounts to maintain contact with potential employers.
- Overall year-to-date computer use in the Library System through September 2007 is up nearly 23% from the same period in 2006. In the City of Buffalo's branch libraries, use is up 62.3%.
- The Central Library's collection of "how-to" computer-related books is the largest such holding by any Library System in New York State. It includes program certification materials that help users become proficient and either keep an existing job or become qualified in a new field of interest.
- The comprehensive array of materials detailing how to conduct a job search, create a resume and cover letter and succeed in an interview is one of the Library's most highly used collections.
- New immigrants to the community look to the B&ECPL for English literacy programs to obtain the skills they need to enter the job market. An innovative pilot program, "The Language Café," designed to help acculturate recent arrivals to the US, is currently in operation at the Library's Niagara branch.
- Working in partnership with Literacy Volunteers of Buffalo & Erie County, the Library System houses several adult literacy "drop-in centers" that act as conduits for strengthening workforce skills and economic development.
- The Library's job-seeker services expand individual and community workforce technology skills and competencies and reduce barriers to employment as well as costs both to local workforce development agencies and employers.