



# Build Community Partnerships

**Partnering with organizations in the community can bring new energy and resources to your school library and provide an integrated focus on academics, leading to improved student learning and healthier communities!**

**Start Small.** Partnerships that begin small may grow into long-term relationships or evolve to include several partnering organizations.

- Begin an after-school tutoring program in partnership with the local Rotary or YMCA. As volunteers become familiar with the school and students, they may suggest new ways to expand the program or recruit new volunteers.
- Partner with local universities or institutes of higher education. For example, invite students of social work, library science, or education to intern in the library. Create special projects, or task the students with organizing materials and integrating new ones.

**Unexpected Partners.** Local businesses or nonprofits may be willing to help in exchange for recognition in the form of a thank-you note on the school website or a social media post about their donation.

- One librarian opened a maker space in his library's workroom. He sought out donations of used computers from the local thrift store. The students opened up the computers and learned about the parts inside. In exchange, the librarian invited a thrift store employee with an interest in a teaching career to be involved in future maker club activities.
- Another librarian in Chicago invited a therapy dog organization to visit her library to show students the connection between a book they were reading, *Fred Stays with Me!* (Little, Brown, 2011), and real community helpers. The children learned about the organization and prepared questions, then spent the morning with the therapy dogs and their handlers, talking about how the dogs are trained and certified to work in hospitals, nursing homes, and schools.

**Sustainability.** Invite administrators and classroom teachers to become involved. Find time to meet together and communicate regularly. Partnerships are strengthened when the librarian has support and a diversity of ideas and talents are engaged in an activity.