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Homeschooling Families Choose to Read Ohio
By Donna King, Guernsey County District Public Library



The [Guernsey County District Public Library](#) was recently awarded a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant for \$1,537.00. The grant money was used to fund our participation in the State Library of Ohio's [Choose to Read Ohio \(CTRO\)](#) initiative. As many of you know, CTRO was implemented in 2009 with the goal of encouraging Ohio families to read together, while spotlighting Ohio authors. We chose to use the grant money for programming aimed at homeschooling families.

Our library and its branches are located in rural eastern Ohio and our county possesses a large homeschooling community. In the past, our homeschooling families were well-served by our bookmobile. However, due to budget cuts, our bookmobile service was discontinued. Our homeschooling families seemed to be desperate, maybe even hungry, for attention and programming. We decided to base our programming on the book [B is for Buckeye: an Ohio Alphabet](#) by Marcia Schonberg, one of this year's CTRO books. This informative book is not only visually stunning, but is a great book for Ohio studies because it deals with Ohio history and Ohio culture. We found the opportunities for programming ideas to be almost endless.



Our CTRO programming consisted of four events that were held in April and May of this year. The first program, "Oh Hey Oh Hi Hello" (we borrowed this title from a lively, humorous song by Jim Gill about Ohio that we sang in our program), was a two-hour preview and discussion of *B is for Buckeye: an Ohio Alphabet*. Thirty-two families signed up and each family received a free copy of the book. We then divided our families into younger and older children and held several age-appropriate art, history, and science activities revolving around the book. This event proved to be very successful, based on favorable evaluations.

Our second event featured a representative from a local educational center, Deerasic Park, dedicated to reconnecting youth with nature. This hour-long program was titled "The Whitetails' Journey: Ohio's State Mammal" and educated our families about whitetail deer habitat, the role of the buckeye tree in Ohio history and Native Americans in Ohio. Marcia Schonberg, author of *B is for Buckeye: an Ohio Alphabet* and an award-winning photographer and journalist, presented our third event. It consisted of an interactive PowerPoint presentation about *B is for Buckeye* and included activities designed to enhance art and science skills. Both of these programs were also successful, well-attended and well-received.

Our fourth event was a field trip to the John and Annie Glenn Historic Site for a living history tour of John Glenn's home. We provided free admission for all of our homeschooled families' children. While not as highly-attended as our previous programs (weather was the big factor), this was informative and memorable. We have a small amount of LSTA grant money left over, so we are planning an additional program in August.

Promotion and marketing for our CTRO programming was done in several ways. All of our local

homeschool groups were contacted via phone and email. We also contacted individual families that we knew were not affiliated with any homeschool groups. Several posters and flyers were designed and distributed. Finally, our local newspaper and radio did some heavy advertising for us.

Would we do this again? You bet we would! We achieved our most important goal, which was to develop some firm relationships with our homeschooling families. This, in turn, is enabling us to know how to serve them in the future. Homeschooling families - here we come!

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