

Show Me the Books!

The Social Responsibilities Special Interest Section (SR-SIS) is coordinating the 8th annual children's book drive this year in St. Louis. The theme in the Show Me State is **Show Me the Books!** This year's efforts will benefit two of the most needy schools in the St. Louis area, Wellston School District's Central Elementary and St. Louis City School District's Vashon 9th Grade Academy.

The **Wellston School District** was established in 1894 and currently educates 600 students in four facilities, including an early childhood center and the Central Elementary School. Wellston, like many small inner suburbs, was plunged into economic depression and social chaos after the losses of population and declining home values of the post-World War II era. Test scores had declined to such an extent by the 1990s that the State of Missouri was forced to place the district into a form of receivership. The City of Wellston has made efforts to stabilize its political, commercial and physical infrastructure and attract new residents. They have also consolidated and reorganized the school system with **Central Elementary** now serving grade levels 1 through 4. Central has slightly less than 200 students and has begun rebuilding the library collection.

Vashon High School is one of a number of schools in the St. Louis City school district that has suffered a plague of financial, political, and severe discipline issues. In January 2006, as part of an immediate effort to create smaller, more manageable student communities, the new superintendent of the city school system took the bold step of removing the current 9th grade class to an off-site facility. The freshman class was relocated to a vacant middle school facility in the downtown area, now known as the **Vashon Williams Ninth Grade Academy**. The academy's library is in the process of building a collection to support the new program. They are in need of all appropriate materials for 14 - 16 year old students. The small amount of funding provided by the school district has allowed the library to purchase only a few reference titles and some fiction items. Currently they have 594 titles (and 653 copies) in their collection. According to the state, the library should have the following in order to meet minimum standards: 350 reference titles, 3080 nonfiction titles, and 1530 fiction titles.

You can help by donating cash, checks, or books that are appropriate for the age groups in the two schools. Please leave donations at the Social Responsibilities SIS table in the exhibit area. Alternatively, it is still not too late to order books from Amazon.com. Just go to: <http://tinyurl.com/og5re>. Books appropriate for the Wellston students are listed on the "2006 Elementary School List," and Vashon's preferred titles can be found on the "2006 9th Grade List." Your donation will be shipped directly to the Book Drive Team.