



**Reading scores begin to soar as 'Book Showdown' Competition gains popularity
December 23, 2013**

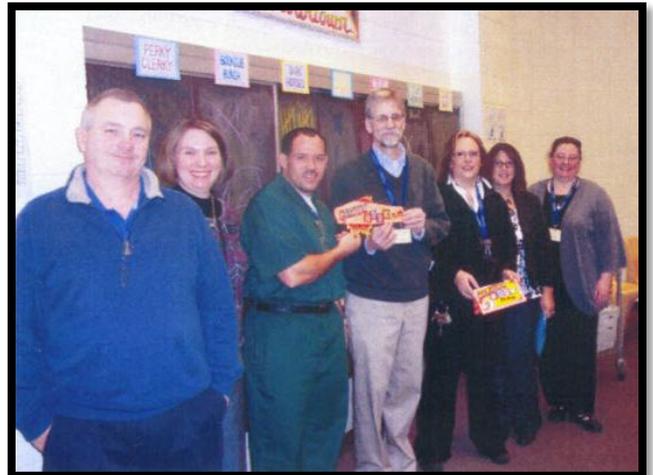


Inmates at the Gowanda Correctional Facility (Erie County) are heavily engaged in a competition that is resulting in drastic improvement to their reading skills. The competition, known as the "Book Showdowns," is the brainchild of Senior Librarian Corinne Leone and combine reading comprehension, teamwork and rivalry. The goal is to increase reading comprehension, and at the same time, help inmates score higher on their high school equivalency exams.

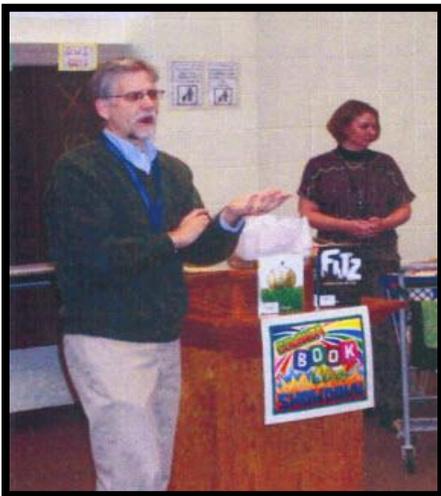
Staff coaches have devised various creative methods for improving their team's skills. Some hold mock showdowns for practice and to generate

enthusiasm, while others show movies that feature related subject matter to help reinforce the content of the book. Some teams have also invented character trivia games to increase reading comprehension and memory retention. Leone and the other staff coaches have also noticed that some of the more advanced readers readily help some of their less-skilled team members however they can.

Mrs. Leone is selective in her choice of book genre and title in order to maintain the appeal of these competitions. "The young adult genre works well because it doesn't exclude certain reading levels," she says, "I also try to choose titles that have a series to keep the participants interested in future showdowns, or just to keep them reading once they're transferred or released."



Thank you card presentation: (l to r) ORC Randy Lineman, Teacher Andrea Schneider, "Dark Horses" Team Captain Lazaro Lugo, author/guest Mick Cochrane, Sr. Librarian Corinne Leone, ORC Wendy Samick, Amy Glende from BECPL



Since the first "Showdown" was held at the facility in the summer of 2009, interest in the competitions has grown among both inmates and staff alike. The competitions have even drawn the attention of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library System (BECPL). BECPL allowed Gowanda to use some of their old questions from one of their "Battle of the Books" competitions, which is held for young adults from across Erie County and the City of Buffalo. They also supplied enough books for each "Showdown" team member to study for their next competition.

The Winter Book Club Showdown, held at the facility on December 19th, also featured two special volunteer guest speakers, Amy Glende from BECPL and Mick Cochrane, pictured left, author of "The Girl Who Threw Butterflies," which was one of the books featured in the competition. Ms. Glende served as a guest judge, while Mr. Cochrane held a

question and answer session with the Showdown participants. He spoke about storytelling as a form of art, the emotions that it evokes and how anyone can become a “storyteller” because of their individual human experience.



ORC Samick with her winning team, The Dark Horses.

The winners of the Winter Book Club Showdown, the facility’s twelfth competition, were 1st Place – The Dark Horses, coached by Wendy Samick, Offender Rehabilitation Coordinator (ORC); 2nd Place – The Perky Clerky’s and Third Place – The Book Club Bunch, both coached by Senior Librarian Leone. Rounding out the rest of the teams were: The Linemanators coached by ORC Randy Lineman, Team Schneider and The Tough Thinkers coached by Teacher Andrea Schneider and Out Of Print coached by Social Worker Sara Lelonek.

Perhaps the real symbols of success came when a 56 year old inmate proudly states that “The Girl Who Threw Butterflies” was the first book he ever read, and when another inmate shared that he is now able to hold longer phone conversations with his teenager when they talk on the phone because they discuss the books they both are reading.