

Local 1857 Presentation to the KCLS Board of Trustees, May 29th, 2014

Good Evening, my name is Diana Prenguber; I am the Washington State Council of County and City Employees, AFSCME Union Staff Representative for Local 1857 which represents Library Workers, including Pages and Maintenance workers at KCLS.

Our members are working in increasingly difficult and dangerous situations. King County has become more and more urbanized, and KCLS has grown from the rural library system it once was to one that sees many patron behaviors and incidents that historically have been "city" library problems. Many of our community libraries are feeling the effects.

Two years ago, Melissa Munn was hired as Community Conduct Coordinator to address the on-going issues related to patron behavior in the libraries. She and Safety Coordinator Danielle Perry have worked with staff to evaluate, and in some cases change policies, and to help staff learn to deal with the stress of working in an environment that often feels unpredictable and unsafe. For example, in the Burien cluster, KCLS set up group counseling to help staff. We are appreciative of these efforts, but many of our members are continuing to see an increase in problem behavior, which is creating unsafe environments for employees and patrons. Our members are concerned about the safety of patrons as well as themselves. So concerned, that Local 1857 formed a committee to research what is happening at KCLS and what other library systems are doing. Our committee reviewed incident reports from KCLS and 911 reports. This is a sample of what we learned.

Between January and March of 2014, the 6 KCLS libraries with the highest number of incidents collectively called 911 over 270 times. Here are a few examples of reasons staff called 911 during the month of January:

- A patron yelling obscenities, threatening to kill staff and another patron. The patron being threatened asked to be escorted to her car
- A heroin overdose
- A patron yelling obscenities at staff and patrons, before kicking the doors and signage in the library and the parking lot
- A patron using loud and aggressive language in the children's area. The patron became lewd, physically and verbally, when confronted by staff. He then pulled out an alcoholic beverage and continued his hostile behavior. Police were called to escort the man off library property. He returned as soon as the police left and 911 was called to have him removed a second time.
- Four patrons openly dealing drugs on library property. As police were addressing these individuals, another patron who frequently sells drugs at the library was seen in the building. Police were asked to trespass this person as well.
- This is a small sample.

While training about the importance of maintaining library buildings and creating a welcoming environment, a KCLS consultant educated staff about the broken window theory. This theory also applies to unsafe and criminal behavior at the library. If the library appears to others to be a place of crime, patrons will misbehave more. We contacted 11 other medium and large library systems in the Pacific Northwest and across the country. Of those, 9 had security officers in some or all of their branches, and 2 did not.

KCLS patrons also do not feel safe in some KCLS branches. On a recent post on the Burien Police Department's Facebook page, a community member commented "We went there twice this week and had to leave because it wasn't a safe environment to have kids." Another community member wrote, "I

would love to go there more often with my kids, but a while ago I saw a fight break out and someone said they had a gun.”

These community members are deciding the library is too dangerous to visit. Staff do not have that choice, is it their place of work. We know that KCLS Administration is also concerned about these issues, and they are working with us. The Joint Labor Management Committee: Local 1857, Local 1857-S (the supervisors union) and management, have made this issue our priority. We had a great meeting on May 15, 2014 to begin and have another scheduled this Friday. We believe KCLS sees safety as a priority and is working with us to create safe libraries for patrons to enjoy and that provide a healthy and safe workplace.

We urge the Board of Trustees to keep the security of our libraries in the forefront as you search for a new Director and to support the efforts of the Joint Labor Management team.

911 calls from January to March 2014

Burien Library

78 calls made to 911, excluding calls made from Burien City Hall, which shares the same address.

Auburn Library

61 calls.

Bellevue Library

44 calls.

Kent Library

39 calls.

Renton Library

29 calls.

Federal Way Library

23 calls.

We contacted the following library systems, who confirmed they have security staff in some of their locations: Timberland, Sno-Isle, Seattle, Tacoma*, Multnomah County (OR), Hennepin County (MN), Eugene (OR), Philadelphia, Boise.

*We did not receive a response from Tacoma, but their Rules of Behavior policy references “security staff.”

Library systems contacted who do not have security officers: Spokane, Pierce County

Community comments on the Burien Police Facebook page from an April 11th post:

-  **Bridgeen Kanyer** Thank you! I don't take my kids to the Burien Library anymore because of the people who hang around there. I'm glad to know someone is watching and doing something about it.
Like · Reply ·  4 · April 11 at 5:00pm
-  **Sallie Tierney** I've lived here most of my life and I'm afraid to go to the library. Sad.
Like · Reply ·  4 · April 11 at 4:56pm
-  **Linda Gallez** Thank you! We went there twice this week and had to leave because it wasn't a safe environment to have kids. Hope it's a kid friendly area when the spray park opens again.
Like · Reply ·  3 · April 11 at 6:44pm
-  **Sandra Gomez** 😊 yah for our police! Keep up the good work!
Like · Reply ·  2 · April 11 at 5:43pm
-  **Debbie Kasper** Thank you. Glad it went safely. Wish more could be done because we all know they'll be back.
Like · Reply ·  2 · April 11 at 4:47pm
-  **Dorena Gifford** This is great news! I would love to go there more often with my kids but awhile ago I saw a fight break out and someone said they had a gun...ever since I have been leery about taking my kids to enjoy the library.
Like · Reply ·  2 · April 11 at 4:52pm
-  **Anabel Adams** I go there several times a week and walk my dog around the park and up and down the streets, we need to be seen so that this crazy behavior doesn't take over our city 😊
FARMERS MARKET coming next month!!
Like · Reply ·  1 · April 12 at 3:18pm
-  **Meagan Milner Keeth** Won't go there anymore either. It's a shame really.
Like · Reply ·  1 · April 11 at 7:18pm

<https://www.facebook.com/BurienPolice>