



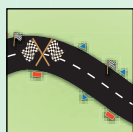
# Cooperstown or Bust! The 2007 MVPs

A couple years ago, my mother-in-law, teenage nephew, and I drove from Michigan on a pilgrimage to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. In the museum, experiencing the achievements of the “best of the best” made me euphoric. Amid the symbols of baseball’s most valuable players who worked hard to exceed mediocrity, I wanted to do the same. But my last hit on the diamond was more than fifteen years ago.

This year’s winners of VOYA’s coveted **Most Valuable Program (MVP)** awards have cemented a place in the “Teen Programming Hall of Fame.” Each programmer hit a colossal home run of a program—without the aid of performance-enhancing substances. The winners’ greatness is measured in how each program went way beyond the standard teen event. What separates the ordinary from the MVP? Innovative programs that follow VOYA’s guiding principles: specialized teen library services, intellectual freedom and equal access, and youth advocacy and youth participation—and then some.

More than twenty programs were eligible for the MVP Award. Many good programs adhered to VOYA’s principles, but only a handful elicited excited cries from VOYA’s Editorial Advisory Board that scrutinized submissions. Only three programs were judged as All-Stars. Read on to discover what makes each MVP worthy of Hall-of-Fame status.

## THE AMAZING TRW RACE: MOST VALUABLE ACTIVE PROGRAM



In my April 2007 column, I highlighted **The Amazing TRW [Teen Read Week] Race** not only because of its unique spin on the popular television show, but also because of its tie-in with Teen Read Week’s “Get Active @ Your Library” theme. Teen

librarian Amy Stultz, formerly of the Broward County Library System in Florida, was the initial mastermind behind this massive race across the three-hundred-acre campus of Nova Southeastern University. Four teams of teens competed in a series of physical, mental, and utterly ridiculous challenges created by Stultz and her Teen Advisory Board (TAB).

Easily the most active program of the year, it seems to take all the fun events that a library could do over the course of a few months, combining them all into one crazy race. To pull it off, Stultz enlisted loads of volunteers and library employees. Just reading about all those race legs made me tired. Now every library will require teens to slurp Jell-O with a straw! That obnoxious sound is captured perfectly by the race’s DVD.

## PRINCETON STUDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL: MOST VALUABLE CREATIVE PROGRAM



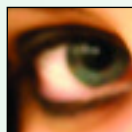
When I was in high school, I used my parents’ massive VHS video camera to film some really bad “movies.” Teens today have access to some amazing equipment. Susan Conlon from the Princeton Public Library in Princeton, New Jersey, harnessed its potential in 2004

when she and a committee of teens started the first **Princeton Student Film and Video Festival** to showcase local teen filmmakers’ talents. Ten films were submitted. By 2006, that number jumped to fifty-four,

including entries from New York City. The library’s fourth festival this July drew sixty-six submissions; standing-room-only crowds attended two nights of twenty-two film screenings, hoping to witness the birth of the next Francis Ford Coppola or Spike Lee. And tickets were free!

Conlon’s coup was recognizing a niche and filling it. The cost of the tools for producing a film indeed have come down in price, but without support, a camera in the hands of a teen who remakes *Halloween* is dangerous. This well-organized festival gives teens a unique opportunity to show their work to an audience of all ages, bringing out the emerging auteur. Bravo to Conlon and her cast for giving teens the screens to project their art.

## TEEN ALTERNATIVE FASHION SHOW: THE 2007 MOST VALUABLE PROGRAM!



How many of you would love to produce a program for \$97 that would result in a crowd of two hundred? Even better, a program that would inspire teens to create clothing from bubble wrap, cardboard, and trash bags that they would model themselves. And this program would involve not only thirty teen planners but also many members of the community lending their support. This program does exist—and it’s VOYA’s 2007 MVP.

Jenine Lillian, formerly Youth Services Librarian at the Fayetteville Public Library in Fayetteville, Arkansas, considers the **Teen Alternative Fashion Show** the highlight of her career—“a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,” she said. “The teens and community continue to be inspired and excited by the unique and memorable experience that we created together.” How many of us would sell our souls to be able to say that about a program? Not only did this imaginative fashion show give teens the chance to express themselves, but it also was an opportunity to stand tall in front of their peers and elders. The show stimulated much media coverage—especially online—that carried its influence far beyond library walls. Both the program and the effort that went into producing it should fuel any teen librarian’s inspiration for the next couple years, at least.

## FINAL INNING

When our trip to Cooperstown ended, our three generations of baseball fans felt as if we had walked among giants and breathed in greatness. May VOYA’s new MVPs set your goalposts higher so you can motivate future librarians by crafting teen library programs worthy of the Hall of Fame.

**[Editor’s Note:** To submit your fabulous teen library program for 2008 MVP consideration, follow the Teen Program Submissions link on VOYA’s home page at <http://www.voya.com>.] ■

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