

## BRAIN FREEZE

by David L. Ewick



Community Collaboration. It's something every public library worth its salt strives to create. Imagine our response at Fulton County Public Library, then, when a terrific opportunity for a multiple entity community collaboration was given to our library. We jumped on it!

The *Rochester Sentinel*, our local newspaper and one of the smallest daily papers in Indiana, worked with local schools, the library, the local radio station, and the local cable access channel to create a multimedia literacy opportunity. Thanks to financial sponsorships by the Hoosier State Press Association Foundation and the Indiana State Reading Association, the *Sentinel* was able to present a ten week long serial. The serial was called "Brain Freeze" and is only one of several serials available to newspapers through Knight-Ridder Corporation. Brain Freeze tells the story of a classroom of elementary school children who work to solve puzzles given to them by a philanthropic rapper named FreeZee, who has promised to donate his mansion for use as a school building if the children can solve his puzzles.

The collaboration began with a meeting of the superintendent of Rochester Community Schools, Debra Howe; *Rochester Sentinel* editor, Bill Wilson; WROI radio station owner, Tom Bair; Rochester Telephone Company representative, Arik Lee; Literacy Coalition director, Gordon Bohs; and Fulton County Library director, Dave Ewick. The group brainstormed ideas to build impetus for kids to read not only Brain Freeze but to go beyond that. We wanted to get parents involved in discussing the serial with their children and to get the children to read more than just Brain Freeze.

The group looked at what each partner could bring to the table. Since the Literacy Coalition is a library program and primarily deals with adult literacy, Mr. Bohs decided to act in a secondary role of assisting the library. Mr. Bair offered to have classrooms read each weekly installment on the radio. Mr. Lee suggested that the phone company could videotape a discussion of

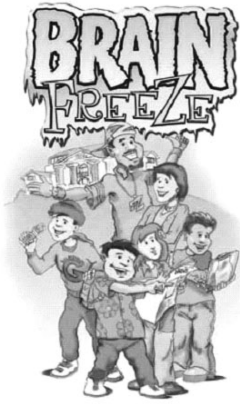
each installment. They decided to hold meetings in a middle school class and to ask local "VIPs," including Chamber of Commerce members, local elected officials, and the partners, to lead the discussions.

Each VIP was asked to link the story to his or her career/position so that students could make connections between the real world and the story. The VIP would develop questions pertaining to the week of his or her discussion in order to keep the process relevant and cumulative. At each meeting, participants would look at solving the riddles presented, discuss how it would feel to take part in such an adventure, and talk about how the lessons learned paralleled scenarios in the work world. Each person who "led" the discussion found that, not only did the students "lead" them, but that they were very articulate and interested in participating.

The *Sentinel* provided newspapers to all participating students for those days when the serial was published, so that teachers could use the entire paper in various lessons in class. The library created a series of annotated book lists with cover art and e-mailed them to the schools and newspaper for distribution to teachers and publication in the paper. The library also created a book display that connected with Brain Freeze in tone, age appropriateness, or appeal.

The final shape of the program was this: Brain Freeze was published each Tuesday, with a discussion by the middle school class on Wednesday afternoon. A fourth grade class visited the radio station each Wednesday to read the weekly segment. Beginning Friday, the video played three times daily for a week, at which time the next segment began airing. While the finale had not yet aired as of the writing of this article, the collaboration is a big success, making new connections between school and the world of work, among the partners, and between teachers and the partners. The good will generated in the community and among the





partners has been an added by-product of the effort, and plans are under discussion to performing similar, possibly “grander,” collaborations in the future.

So, if your library is looking for ways to engage the community, try a collaboration project. You could find it’s not only a fun, wonderful learning experience, but that the by-products of goodwill and support spill over into other ventures.

**PARTNERS**

The *Rochester Sentinel* – W.S. Wilson, editor, Sarah Wilson, publisher

Rochester Community School Corporation – Dr. Debra Howe, Superintendent

WROI 92.1 FM radio station – Tom Bair, owner

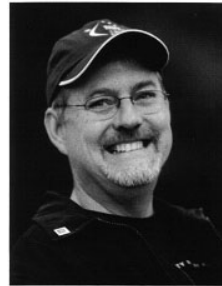
Rochester Telephone Company – Arik Lee, representative

Fulton County Public Library – Dave Ewick, director

Fulton County Literacy Coalition – Gordon Bohs, Director

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

The son of former State Librarian Ray Ewick and retired Johnson County Public Library department head Joann Ewick, Dave is a happily married father of three. Dave holds a BS in psychology from Purdue, an MS in counseling from IU, and an IU-MLS. He began his professional library career at the Shelbyville-Shelby County Public Library as a children’s librarian and then went to the Johnson County Public Library as the head of audio-visual services. He has been the director at FCPL for 16 years where they have just begun a major construction project due to be completed in June of 2007. He has been president of the Rochester City Council for 3 years. In his spare time, Dave is a volunteer for the American Cancer Society and encourages everyone to get the proper screenings and live a healthy lifestyle.




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**BRAIN FREEZE CHAPTER 1 - SUMMARY & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

4th Grade Class – Ms. Roosevelt

Goldenrod Elementary School – Closing

Kids will be sent to various different schools

Students happy until realize will be split up

Kids met & came up with idea to save school

Used media to get word out of need for help – wrote press releases (Radio, newspaper, and TV)

Who – Students of Goldenrod Elementary  
 What – Request financial help  
 When - Immediately  
 Where –Goldenrod Elementary School fund (XYZ Bank)  
 How - Send checks to Goldenrod Elementary School fund (XYZ Bank)  
 Why - To repair (save) the school

Letter received from famous alumni – rap star FreeZee sends DVD message

Offers to give his mansion for school building if the students can solve his puzzles.

## THIS WEEK'S CLUE

You gotta travel to the capital city of insurance – (Hartford, Connecticut?)  
I'll get you there for free – you have my assurance.  
Then send me back a photo of 2 houses side-by-side.  
In each of them a famous writer did reside. (Henry Ward Beecher & Lymon Abbott?)  
One thing the famous books they wrote did ensure.  
Was that the treatment of black citizens was in for a cure. (civil rights?)

What usually happens when you feel something is being done “to you”? (anger, feeling of powerlessness, fear?)

How did these students react? (Happy, then sad, then found a way to act in a positive fashion.)

Can you think of anything here in Rochester that has been changed or done by kids your age? (Skatepark, concert, even Manitou Mountain)

### BRAIN FREEZE CHAPTER 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some of the different emotions the students experience throughout chapter 1? Why do they have all these emotions?
- How do they feel when Mrs. Roosevelt announces that the school will be closing?
- How would you feel if it was announced that our school would be closing?
- What if you found out that you might be assigned to go to a different school?
- How do they feel when they find out about FreeZee's challenge? Why?
- Would his challenge be something that you would be excited about? Would you want to participate?
- When the students find out about the school closing, they create a persuasive argument to the media and community. What are some of the ideas the students present? Do you think these are good ideas? Why or why not?
- Do you think this story is realistic? Would you want something like this to happen in our school?

\*\*We will probably not have time to discuss all the questions. But, I will not ask them in order and more than one person will answer for each question, so be ready to discuss. Also, if you disagree with something someone else says, you are welcome to politely say that in the discussion. That will make it more interesting! And finally, let's remember to have fun!!!! Let me know if you have questions!