

Celebrate Literacy

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It's time to celebrate our community-wide literacy efforts!

Reading for All – a name we give to all of our collective efforts to improve literacy - has only existed a short time and already we are seeing progress. Since 2007 we have seen an improvement in our 3rd grade and 8th grade reading scores. That is a good indicator of the hard work of teachers, school administrators, parents, volunteers, and organizations all over the county. Two things are important, here: no one person or organization can take singular credit for the improvement; at the same time, all those who are involved in efforts to improve literacy and student success are contributing to the success of students and to that improvement. We are all part of the solution. What we know to be true is that the literacy bug is catching!

The most recent success, as noted in Bill Church's editorial last Sunday, was that over 500 people attended the ***For the Love of Literacy: Unlocking the door to learning*** conference last weekend. One of the most exciting and tangible things that happened was that 166 participants pledged to read 25 minutes a day to a child. If all of them keep their promise, that's 4,150 minutes a day. That brings us to 1,514,750 minutes or 25,245 hours per year that children in our communities will be read to by an adult.

Thanks to the generous contributions of county residents during the holiday book drive, all conference participants were allowed to take home 10 books of their choosing. We gave away 4,000 books to homes and organizations where children will use and love them! Many participants were parents or childcare providers. Books are also being prepared to give to the No Child Left Behind conference participants on February 27th at McKay. Additionally, over 300 books were given to Lamb Elementary's literacy night, 400 went to the Salem Keizer Education Foundation's winter break breakfast and lunch program, 250 adult appropriate books were given to the Marion County Jail, and almost 400 books went to children in foster care over the holidays.

Where else will the books go? Over 50 partner organizations have completed a needs assessment and will be asked to pick them up in early March to collect boxes of books for their programs. Several nonprofit, child and family serving organizations will be able to reach thousands of people with books donated through the book drive.

If you're asking yourself if *Reading for All* still needs help sorting and preparing the remaining books for distribution, the answer is YES! Details on dates and times will soon be posted to the Reading for All website at www.Reading4All.com.

Thanks to the Oregon Community Foundation and the energetic support of the Statesman Journal and our local schools and businesses, *Reading for All* is up and running in the tri-county region of Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties. You'll be seeing more of us around your community...catch the literacy bug and join us!