

# Young Children/Priority One



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## Kiwanians Read Around the World

Open a child's mind to reading—all year long

Every child should experience the joy of reading. Kiwanis members believe this, and have long been dedicated to Kiwanis International's Read Around the World program.

What used to be a month long observance is now a focus for the whole year, giving the entire Kiwanis family of clubs the chance to implement Read Around the World projects at any time.

More reading projects touch more children's lives.

The Kiwanis Read Around the World program focuses on sharing the joy of books with children—from reading

with them to getting them books they can have for their very own.



If you're interested in learning more about the Read Around the World program, or how you can help get books to children who need them most, contact

Kiwanis International office at 1-317-875-8755, ext. 211.

**Kiwanians give books and promote reading in Batesville, AR.**

While the national motto of Kiwanis is "serving the children of the world," Batesville Kiwanians are doing their part to serve the children of the area.

After retiring as a second- and third-grade teacher for 38 years, Marie Priest, 74, longed to return to school. With books in hand — literally — Priest returned in 1996 where she read books to students once a week for eight years at West Elementary.

Here, Priest was reminded of the importance of literacy after witnessing some students stashing their checked-out library books in their desks without a page turned.

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### • Jane Judy-Miller sez:

- Have Fun!
- Commit to Young Children!
- Communicate Successes!
- Revitalize the Program!
- Revitalize Kiwanians!
- Cross Boundaries/oceans to do what is right for young children!
- Have Fun!

## Batesville, Arkansas Kiwanians (continued)

She has tried to stress that importance as chairwoman of the Batesville Kiwanis reading program since 1999.

The reading program falls under “Young Children: Priority One,” a larger, ongoing service program that addresses the needs of children. Kiwanis clubs are encouraged to carry out at least two Young Children projects per calendar year, states the club’s Web site.

As program chairwoman for nine years, Priest has read to children in kindergarten classes, preschools and Head Start programs in the Batesville School District.

In those years, Priest has become known at local dollar stores where she shops for the books she gives away. “They know me at Dollar Tree,” Priest says with a laugh. “(They’ll say) here comes the reading lady.” Kiwanis has given more than 3,500 books to children in the district.

“We’re a group of men and women who get together and come up with good things to do for you,”



and giving a book is one of those things, is how Priest describes Kiwanis to the children, she said.

With money budgeted from the club, Priest shops for the books at dollar stores. If one store in Batesville does not have what she is looking for, “I’ll just make a little journey down the road” to Cave City or Searcy, she said.

Pages with vibrant colored pictures are deciding factors for what books Priest will choose. However, she remains adamant about classic stories and will not choose books with modern-day cartoon characters. Priest also prefers books that require parent involvement.

Priest, who has always enjoyed reading to children, said she likes to buy books that have lessons to be learned for the characters involved. She strives to show how these lessons apply to them even if the lessons are not written on the pages.

Take for instance “The Little Red Hen,” Priest said. The other farm animals only offer to help the hen because they want a piece of the “yummy” bread she baked for her babies. She decides not to share her bread because no one would help her make it. It is the lesson of hard work that Priest hopes to convey.

While Priest hopes her lessons will last with the children, she

cannot believe they remember her years later as the woman who read books at their school.

“It’s amazing to me that they remember me a year later after just 30 minutes (spent reading to them),” Priest said.



One girl even remembered the book she picked out when Priest visited. “That’s the book with the sticker in it,” the little girl told her, Priest said.

The stickers on the inside covers let children know that Kiwanis provided their book. Priest said Kiwanis club members deserve a lot of credit in making the program a success. Members donate their time to help read, take pictures and put stickers inside book covers.

Kiwanis deserves the credit for all of this, Priest said. “I just enjoy doing it (reading).”

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## Heroes' encourage love of reading

Just as Kiwanis clubs should be preparing to encourage literacy through February's Read Around the World campaign, Key Club members are busy doing the same through their organization's Winter Season of Service, Read & Lead.

Read & Lead, founded by former Key Club International President Pettus Randall, is a one-on-one reading program that aims to demonstrate to children the joy of reading and develop in them a love of books.

Members of the Key Club at Grace Bible High School in Gadsden, Alabama, know the importance of turning children on to reading. Two Read & Lead projects—a reading day at an area mall and a reading corner at a local event—proved so successful the club decided a third effort was warranted.

“Those first two projects really let us see how much we enjoyed reading to children and working with them on their level,” says Maggie Hutchinson, the club's immediate past president.



“We wanted to get some people there who are little kids' heroes,” says Maggie. “When they showed up in their uniforms, it was really nice.”

In addition, the club provided lemonade and cookies and painted faces, creating a festive atmosphere.

“Parents loved the project,” Maggie says. “They were able to spend time talking with the other adults, and they said they were really impressed that a group of teenagers would take their Saturday to read to children.”

It seems the children who participated may have found some more heroes.

**For more information contact Bob Bottsford at [rbottsford@bham.rr.com](mailto:rbottsford@bham.rr.com)**

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## Pennsylvania Kiwanis Club members read to children

“We decided we wanted to reach more kids the next time.”

The result was the club's Books by the Bridge project. The event's title stemmed from the group's coup of securing a gazebo near a bridge and in a central location. Once a site was selected, promoting the event became the members' next priority.

“The biggest thing for us was to find a place we could afford and that would be accessible to most people,” Maggie explains. “Once we had the date and location, we put fliers up around town and contacted radio stations and newspapers.”

Key Clubbers read to 20 children during the event and sent each child home with at least one book. Titles read aloud included Dr. Seuss books, the Back Yardigans, and Dora the Explorer books. The Key Club purchased books for the kids to take home, and the area chapter of Success by Six also donated books and toys to the cause. Guest readers included a fireman and a doctor, both of whom came to the event dressed in their work attire.

Each month members of the Kiwanis Club of Wilkes-Barre participate in ‘Priority One: Read Around the World Early Literacy Program.’ The program was initiated with a Kiwanis Read Around the World Day in October 2001 and recently benefited children at a Head Start Center, McGlynn Learning Center and at the Domestic Violence Center.

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# Get Ready To Read

By: Dr. Wil Blechman, MD

Both YCPO International Chair JJ Miller and I have previously forwarded some material from a website called, Get Ready to Read. It is, in turn, part of a website related to learning disabilities. Both of these websites are available to anyone at no charge and have accurate information that can help direct potentially more valuable projects by Kiwanis Clubs. Let's face it the more that members of Kiwanis Clubs know about any topic, the greater the likelihood that decisions will be made by those clubs which will provide programs of greater value.

Why should we bother with reading (literacy)?

Statistics are not always easy to interpret, but in 2003, some reports came out which should make each of us sit up and take notice:

(A) 50 million Americans cannot read or comprehend above the 8th grade level.

(B) Existing literacy programmes reach less than 10% of these people. (C) The U.S. has a dropout rate of 29% compared to 5% in Japan and 2% in Russia. (D) Illiteracy costs business in the U.S. \$225 billion a year. (E) 60% of prison inmates are illiterate. (F) Almost 50% of adults who receive welfare are illiterate. (G) Almost 75% of those who are unemployed are illiterate. (H) Children of unemployed parents are 5 times more likely to drop out of school.

Something that you may never have heard but that is shocking is that at least one state predicts its need for jail cells on the basis of 3rd graders' reading ability! Why should that be? Through 3rd grade, children are learning to read. After 3rd grade, they must read to learn... If they have not developed their reading skills sufficiently, they will not be able to assimilate knowledge through reading and will likely fall further and further behind in their schooling and often drop out, many then end up in the juvenile or criminal justice systems... After all, they can't get a meaningful job.

Something else you may or may not realize is that the ability to read is enhanced or diminished by what happens with children prior to ever entering kindergarten or first grade. This is why my personal preference is for involvement with preschoolers, rather than with the school-age child.

If you wish to learn more, open up the Get Ready to Read website and sign up for information. (<http://www.getreadytoread.org/>)