

2009 MAGNA AWARDS

Advancing
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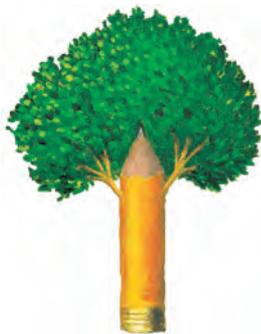
**American
School**

AMERICAN SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL - THE SOURCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

2009 GRAND PRIZE WINNER: 5,000-20,000 ENROLLMENT

Giving the Gift of Literacy

Springfield Public Schools, Springfield, Ore.



SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT

Nancy Bigley

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Laurie Adams
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SUPERINTENDENT

Nancy Golden

PROGRAM NAME

Gift of Literacy

DISTRICT DILEMMA

More than half of Springfield's children live below the poverty line. Many of these families do not place a high value on reading; consequently, many students do not begin to read until the first grade and have difficulty catching up to national and state standards. Research indicates that literacy must be encouraged at an early age, so the Springfield School Board began seeking opportunities to creatively reach young readers.

SOLUTION

Gift of Literacy works to promote literacy and place books in the hands of children. This annual program exposes first-graders to a variety of books and then presents each child with his or her favorite book at a day-long reading celebration, fully funded through community partnerships. Those partnerships include the Rotary Clubs of Springfield and TEAM Springfield, an alliance of city government agencies. At the reading celebration held at Lane Community College, students receive new backpacks filled with educational goodies. They also



Many Springfield elementary students do not have access to books at home and were behind in reading when they arrived at kindergarten.

get to meet some of their favorite storybook characters and listen to books read aloud by school board members and other community leaders.

BOARD INVOLVEMENT

The Springfield School Board recognized the need for Gift of Literacy and made the initial investment to launch the program. In collaboration with the Rotary Clubs, board members request support from local businesses and community organizations to fund the program. Each year, the board and the Rotary Clubs have raised more than \$40,000 to make the program possible. Under the board's leadership, the program continues to build partnerships with businesses and community organizations to pro-



Springfield first-graders receive their favorite hardcover books, as well as backpacks full of other educational items.



School board members and other community volunteers read aloud to Springfield first-graders during the annual reading celebration held at a local community college.

THIS PROGRAM PROMOTES LITERACY AND PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO BE ENGAGED IN READING IN NEW AND EXCITING WAYS.

mote literacy throughout the Springfield community and to serve district first-graders with a better literacy experience each year.

RESULTS

Gift of Literacy places books in the hands of children. This program promotes literacy and provides the opportunity for students, parents, teachers, and community members to be engaged in reading in new and exciting ways. Reading is encouraged during the summer months by providing students a book to read at home and by highlighting community reading programs.

Success has been measured by the rate of increased participation in local reading clubs and library reading programs. The program began in 2007 with the ultimate goal of increasing literacy rates in the community. Long-term success would show an increase in the number of students meeting or exceeding Oregon state assessment standards, and eventually an increasing number of students pursuing higher education.

Local organizations, schools, and libraries also share in the benefits of the program by receiving copies of each year's book collection. To date, more than 3,500 books have been distributed throughout the community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Jeff DeFranco, director of communications and facilities, at jeff.defranco@sps.lane.edu. The district's website is at www.sps.lane.edu.



The school board, in partnership with the local Rotary Clubs, raises money from the community to pay for the program.