

Canyon News

FEATURES

Reading To Kids Is Time Well Spent

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LOS ANGELES—On the Second Saturday of every month hundreds of volunteers gather at seven Los Angeles Elementary schools with one common endeavor; to read a book to under-served children.



Reading to Kids provides an enriching experience for children and volunteers alike, (Photo Courtesy Reading to Kids)

"It's important for children to enjoy reading and to have books at school, as well as at home; It's important for their future," said Charlie Orchard, the Managing director of Reading to Kids, a grassroots non-Profit Organization that seeks to spark a love of reading in under-served school children.

Reading to Kids donates copies of books read aloud by volunteers so that students can access them any time.

Fourth and fifth grade students in particular are introduced to the first few chapters of their books during the reading clubs and then have the opportunity to check the books out from their libraries. Each child who attends the monthly reading clubs will also receive their own paperback prize book to take home to build their personal libraries.

In 1999, Reading to Kids started out as a small group of volunteers, teachers and administrators at Gratts Elementary school in Los Angeles, with just eight readers and twenty children.

Fourteen years later RTK hosts volunteer meet ups at over seven schools with just over 14,460 volunteers with a collective accumulation of over 129,000 volunteer hours, serving an average of 800 to 1200 children monthly.

To date, Reading to Kids has donated 20,231 hardcover books to their partner libraries; given 112,195 prize books to participating children; and more than 21,800 books to parents and teachers.

"The teachers at our schools select what the children read and this way they leverage their vast experience and knowledge of what is appropriate for their kids. Every Volunteer here is a reading a book that was chosen by a teacher for that grade level" says Orchard, "we then donate [the books] to the school libraries; These are books that [Reading To Kids] has bought," he added.

RTK is not just enriching the lives of school children attending the program. Volunteers find their participation in the reading clubs to be an uplifting and invigorating experience.

"There is a positive feeling of community as soon as you walk in the door," said first time volunteer--Pilaar Terry,"[Reading to Kids] made sure I was very informed about what I was getting into and what the process of the day would be like."

"It kind of built on my excitement just to get ready to interact with the kids," Terry added, "It was an extremely positive experience and I can't believe I had not done it sooner."

For anyone interested in volunteering or making donations, you can sign up and find more information at readingtokids.org.