



Early Readers Now!

Volume 1, Issue 1

June/July 2007

The Book Buddy Bulletin

Early Readers Now Distributes 2,000 Books to District Child Care Centers!

Exclamations of excitement and literary appreciation echoed through the auditorium of Friendship House on the morning of June 5th, as teachers and administrators collected boxes of children's books for their classrooms. Thanks to generous donations from various organizations, Early Readers Now (ERN) was able to distribute over 2,000 children's books to 15 Washington, DC child development centers! "This is hands-down one of the most enjoyable parts of this program," Jessica Young, ERN Coordinator,

shares. "So many young children will benefit from this book drive, it's just amazing." Not only will the books serve as a nice addition to classroom libraries; many children can begin building their personal libraries, as teachers send new books home with their students. "It's so nice to be able to give children their very own copies of classics like *Green Eggs and Ham*," one teacher said. "These are stories that will stay with them forever." ERN and its participating centers would like to say a very special thank you to

First Book DC, the Dreamdog Foundation, Keshet Child Development Center, and Arlington Girl Scout Troop #4753 for their generosity in donating so many books; as well as to Friendship House for letting us use their beautiful auditorium for the distribution!

*If you'd like to donate books to a DC child care center, please email jyoung@dclearns.org.



Special points of interest:

- Celebrating Outstanding Volunteers during 2nd ERN Training, page 2
- ERN Chosen as Benefactor of Company-wide Book Drive, page 3
- Volunteer Voices: What Veteran Book Buddies have to say about Participating in the Early Readers Now Program, page 3



ERN Training—Paving the Way to a Meaningful Book Buddy Experience

Of the many questions I receive from interested volunteers, one of the most common is, "How do I know what to do when I start volunteering in the classroom?". Because ERN serves children at such a developmentally significant age, it's vital that our volunteers be fully-prepared with the necessary strategies and techniques to provide these children with the support they need. Thanks to our partners at Friendship House, Book Buddies receive a comprehensive, interactive training, delivered by various early childhood experts... (continued on page 2)

Facilitator Jackie Edmonds, and volunteer Joseph Sesay discuss a fun Book Buddy activity.

Paving the Way continued...

Our most recent ERN volunteer training, held on June 20th and 21st, covered a broad range of early childhood education topics, such as Early Reading First Legislation, learning to read "basics", behavior management strategies, instructional techniques, and working with children with special needs.

Part of what makes the training so meaningful and purposeful for volunteers, is its foundation in and use of

cooperative learning strategies.

"Participants seem to really enjoy the interactive parts of the training," facilitator Nicol Christie states. "The feedback that we've gotten always refers to the group and partner activities. Cooperative Learning is an invaluable strategy for teaching kids as well as adults because we all learn best from each other, especially our peers."

June's training was especially significant, because it included our first volunteer recognition

component. Book Buddy Adele Behn, one of the very first ERN volunteers to be placed, served as a guest speaker at the training. Besides sharing her experiences as a Book Buddy at Friendship House, and offering helpful tips to the captive audience of potential volunteers, Adele was also recognized with a special certificate for her outstanding contribution to early literacy volunteerism.



Outstanding volunteer Adele Behn works on pronunciation with her book buddy

Upon completing the two part, four hour training session, every volunteer received a Book Buddy Toolkit; each kit included all of the information covered in the training, as well as additional educational resource guides from the National Institute for Literacy, and a small bundle of new children's books to get them started on their read aloud experience. The next training will take place in September; please call 202-331-0141 ext. 23 for details...we hope you can join us!

"My motto for training is, if I'm bored, then the participants certainly will be bored, so we try to get them up out of their seats, processing bits of information that they've learned in groups and having lots of discussions - really just like we'd do in the classroom." -Nicol Christie, Trainer



Volunteers working on a group activity

ERN Chosen as Beneficiary of ESI's Employee Volunteer Program

One of the goals of Early Readers Now is to help build up the classroom libraries of our participating child care centers by collecting and distributing 100+ books to each classroom. Thanks to a recent partnership with ESI, a professional services company with offices in DC and Bethesda, we will continue to grow exponentially closer to meeting that goal.

Each year, ESI chooses a cluster of community-based organizations as the focus of its philanthropic efforts. Early

Readers Now is thrilled to have been chosen as one of these lucky organizations in the coming year! On June 27th, ERN attended ESI's Employee Volunteer Fair, and although the free ice cream catered by Ben & Jerry's was certainly a perk, the major highlight of the event was the overwhelming interest by ESI employees in supporting District preschoolers!

Through both individual donations and company-wide book drives, ESI has pledged to put greater numbers of

quality children's books, in Spanish and English, into the hands and classrooms of Washington, DC pre-k students.

A very special thank you to Wanda Schwalb at ESI for choosing to support Early Readers Now child care centers!

Volunteer Voices: Read what our Book Buddy Volunteers have to say about Participating in Early Readers Now!

Cherie Carney, Book Buddy at UPO Child Development Center #4, shares her thoughts on the following questions...

What Attracted You to Volunteering with Early Readers Now?

"I was attracted initially to the fact of helping someone so young to learn and develop. It appealed to me greatly to become an influence in someone who might not necessarily have access to those luxuries we take for granted. Reading, to me, is a basic necessity for a child. It is really the only thing that helps them to develop not only vocabulary, but a broader perspective to our world. When I was young, books brought possibilities to me and I never forgot that. I was so honored to have an opportunity to bring that experience to someone else"

What do you like most about being a Book Buddy to a preschooler?

"I love to think that I have gotten someone in their purest form. Untainted, unbiased and completely open-minded. Children want to know every-

thing and to be the one to give them information is a great joy. It's almost like watching a tree grow from a seed."

Nicol Christie, Volunteer Training Facilitator, shares her thoughts on volunteering with ERN:

"As a professional educator and life-long learner, I am both excited and touched by the willingness of people from various walks of life, including top business executives and stay-at-home moms, to offer their time to such a worthy endeavor- the emergent reader. I know that the work that the volunteers do creates its own intrinsic reward, but outside of their own gratification from giving back, is a much larger, more global benefit to our educational centers and schools that are sometimes struggling with the rigors of child care, financing, meeting parental demands as well as local and federal performance guidelines. We certainly welcome the compassion, diversity and support that the volunteers bring to young readers in the DC metro area. This project is a model for excellence across the country and is a real, meaningful way that folks who want to get involved in being part of the

solution, and not just talking about the problem, can contribute."

Companies find great opportunities for "Team Volunteering" through ERN as well. Jennifer Steen, part of a group of book buddies from the Willard Intercontinental Hotel shares...

"From a team standpoint, it's fun to have team members from different positions that range from hourly employees to the Executive level participating in an activity where not only does it help us to be better people, but helps young children. It gives us common ground on which we can communicate, while knowing that we are helping with the well-being of children simultaneously. It's also a great way to break up the workday while doing something that is beneficial and fun!"

Early Readers Now!

D.C. LEARNs, Inc
1612 K Street, NW
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 202-331-0141 ext.23
Fax: 202-331-0143
E-mail: jyoung@dclearns.org

Promoting school readiness
through meaningful adult-child
interaction.

We're on the Web!
[www.dclearns.org/
earlyreadersnow](http://www.dclearns.org/earlyreadersnow)



EARLYREADERSNOW!

Volunteers Should...

Commit: Believe in the importance of what you are doing, understand the aims of the program, ask for guidance if you need it.

Always be up for a challenge **Be Reliable**

Connect: Empathize with your students **Show interest in your students' lives**

Be patient and encouraging

Be prepared to explain things in many different ways Be a self-starter

Be vigilant: Make yourself available to respond to individual needs

Respect the students you serve

Be open-minded **Be firm about your expectations**

Communicate: You are another pair of eyes and ears; share your observations with staff members within your volunteer program

Leave emotions at home—Your patience, support, and involvement need to be unconditional

Remember that YOU control the interaction, not the child

Enjoy both teaching and learning

Early Readers Now Volunteer Literacy Program is a one-to-one read aloud program serving -3 and -4 year old children in Washington, DC child care centers. Volunteers, fondly called "Book Buddies", engage students in interactive storytelling and related literacy experiences on a weekly basis, with the goal of supporting school readiness in young children.

Would you like to become a Book Buddy to a DC preschooler?

Please contact Jessica Young, Early Readers Now Coordinator, at 202-331-0141 ext. 23, or

email jyoung@dclearns.org today!

You *CAN* make a difference!!!

"Every week, Jasmin looks forward to spending time with her "book buddy". This week in the Morning Circle, Jasmin shared with the rest of the class that she had a "GREAT TIME" with her buddy the week before and hopes that Cristina can come to her new school when she goes to Kindergarten. One on one reading can be such a powerful and positive reading experience. The ERN program has recruited a wonderful volunteer for CentroNia- I hope we can get more!"

*~Marissa Castro Mikoy,
Program Director, PreK
Incentive Program at
CentroNia*