Local - Cathy Myers, raising good readers

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Staff Writer

Reading is “fundamental” was an oft-heard educational adage for many years. It is still adhered today and many local people are helping our students achieve the goals of making every student a good reader to help them achieve a successful future.

One local resident who has created a niche helping first graders learn the magic of reading is Cathy Myers, a retired fiber optics engineer, who does it simply by coming to the school and reading to the kids once a week. She goes each Thursday and reads to three classrooms. This year, she is reading to two first-grade classes and one third-grade class. She coordinates the books she reads from the Crestline Library with the teachers in order to compliment the curriculum.

In the third grade classroom, they are reading, together, chapter books in the Magic Tree House series. After reading, they discuss the story and engage in an activity or craft that relates to the book. Then they have a treat.

In the first grade classrooms, “Miss Cathy” is warmly welcomed by students, as they are always thrilled to see her because they know a good hour of fun and learning is ahead. “We use play, games, dance, crafts and activities related to the books to build comprehension and enjoyment of the stories,” Meyers told The Alpenhorn News adding, “I sit on the rocking chair and they are gathered around close on the rug. They have story words to help them ask and answer questions about the stories and the main characters. Then they do an activity; sometimes it’s writing or drawing. They learn through play and get a treat. This method supports the students and encourages them to read, because it is exciting.”

Myers reads to 54 students in first grade and another 30 in third grade. “I do this because of the joy and inspiration I receive from the kids. Sharing books is opening the world to them, and to engage them in a life skill and enjoy it with them is the most wonderful feeling. It encourages all of us to continue reading,” she said.

Former students often run into her in the grocery store and excitedly introduce her to their parents. “I’ve been doing this for seven years. I enjoy seeing former students and hearing how they are doing today. I am not their teacher, or parent, but a friend who has shared books with them and they happily remember,” Myers said.

Myers would love to see additional in-school readers at all the elementary campuses in the Rim District. If anyone were interested in this program, she would be willing to help him or her find a good classroom fit.

April is Public Schools Month. The local Masonic Lodge is also an active promoter of education, and for years was the force behind the Open House night each spring in the schools. For the past three years, Masons have been supporting the Raising a Reader Literacy Partnership in the elementary schools. The program strengthens families and it boosts students’ chances of succeeding.

On April 8, Twin Peaks 711 Masonic Lodge Master Aaron Creighton and District 8 Inspector Lynn Parker will be at the Bing Wong School in San Bernardino, presenting the Grand Master their donation, a portion of the $101,000 the Grand Master is presenting to support Inland Empire education. The California Masonic Foundation’s mission is to apply Masonic principles in support of education, leadership and communities through several important programs that touch the lives of thousands each year.

The Twin Peaks Masonic Lodge is proud they have had 100 percent contributions and that the Inland Empire has had 100 percent contribution for the past three years, the only division to achieve that distinction.

“I was so impressed when I learned about the Raising a Reader project,” Creighton told The Alpenhorn News on Saturday. Since 1999, the Raising a Reader program has assisted in teaching over one million kids to read. Raising A Reader is an early literacy and family engagement program for children ages 1-8 that helps families develop book-sharing routines with their children. Each week, children in the Raising A Reader program take home 2-4 different books, exposing them to approximately 100 high quality children’s books each year.

The Masonic Lodge also has a scholarship program that gives deserving high school students a chance to complete a college education through their Investment in Success Scholarship program.