

First Book grants give books to local children

Distributions begin for preschool children, additional grants planned for elementary grades

THE NEXT DOOR HAS been distributing their new shipment of books to families for the last few weeks during regularly scheduled Home Visits through a grant from First Book-Wasco County's Healthy Families program.

Reactions to receiving new books are always fun to observe, said First Book-Wasco County founder Nancy Paul. "Toddlers become especially excited to receive a new book and they usually respond with 'yeah' and curiosity about what the book is about. It is the natural curiosity of toddlers, combined with their enthusiasm over new things, that paint a beautiful scene of early literacy."

One 2-year-old was so enthusiastic about her new book she handed it to her dad and climbed into his lap and asked him to read it immediately, Paul said. "It was a sweet moment between father and daughter. A preschool aged boy was so thrilled to receive a book called 'Diapers Are Not Forever,' that he took it to the bathroom with him and asked his mom to read

"It was a sweet moment between father and daughter."

Nancy Paul

it while he was sitting on the potty."

The content of books can be meaningful to the child's experience in addition to teaching literacy skills that will last a lifetime. Once the First Book grant is fully used, about 80 low income children will have received about six books each, she said.

On Feb. 25, Oregon Child Development Coalition's Migrant Head Start in The Dalles had their First Book book grant distribution. Teachers in each classroom talked to the parents about the importance of literacy and reading with their child. They talked about the children's favorite books at school and what a group "read aloud" looked like. Each child in the current program was given two books.

Afterwards, parents were given time to read the new books with their child.

Teachers talked about different ways to read with their child, depending on their age, and different questions they could ask the children.

"The parents commented that the books were full of beautiful, colorful pictures and they were excited that the books were either in Spanish or bilingual so the whole family could enjoy

them," Paul said. The children were excited to be given two books of their very own and went around showing their friends.

Another event is planned for the summer migrant program.

In the fall, the Wasco County Advisory Board hopes to give book grants to Chenoweth and Colonel Wright elementary schools, Maupin school, Mid-Columbia Children Council's Head Start and Celilo school.

"The community can help raise funds by holding birthday parties honoring the mission of First Book, buying book ownership stickers in memory or honor of a loved one, having fundraisers to generate funds for literacy of children, or having a First Book display in a business and giving patrons the opportunity to buy First Book book ownership stickers for \$3 a sticker," Paul said.

Donations are tax deductible through the 501(3)c nonprofit national First Book effort in Washington D.C., where all funds are sent.

All funds are used for books in Wasco County.

Volunteers are needed for fundraising and publicity. For more information on this local literacy effort contact



This The Next Door Family Services Home Visit family were among those receiving a "First Book" book to read in their home, funded by a grant from First Book/Wasco County. Contributed photo

Nancy Johanson Paul, 541-490-5330 or nancypaul@gorge.net. Tax deductible donations can be sent to First Book/Wasco County PO Box 82 The Dalles, Oregon 97058.

Serious Theater auditions open

Serious Theater kicks off their 2020 season with auditions for a new play, "The King, The Final Hours."

"The King, The Final Hours," is written by New York playwright Mark Macias, and premiered Off-Broadway in New York City, selling out three weeks of performances in October of 2019. It received positive reviews in the New York Post, NY 1, Channel

11, Catholic TV, Brooklyn Eagle, Broadway World, Talkin' Broadway and the Brooklyn Gazette.

The play calls for both a young and an old Elvis, Ann Margret, Priscilla Presley, Gladys Presley (Elvis' mother) and Colonel Tom Parker (Elvis' manager) as well as a number of small parts for men and women (many of which can be combined). The Elvis and

Ann Margret roles require singing.

THE DALLES CHRONICLE (ISSN 0747-3443) is published twice weekly, every Wednesday and Saturday. Subscription rates: One year print subscription and digital access \$55. Six month print subscription and digital access \$35. Three month print subscription and digital access \$21. Known office of publication, 811 E. Second St., The Dalles, OR 97058. Periodical postage is paid at The Dalles, Oregon. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE DALLES CHRONICLE, P.O. Box 1910, The Dalles, OR 97058.

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