



Thomas Patterson Emerald

Sara Hoskinson, who has volunteered since October, reads to Aidan Ziegler-Hansen as part of the Start Making A Reader Today program.

SMART

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smile on your face. It really makes you happy."

She also said reading to the children has helped her narrow down her career focus to teaching third grade.

SMART School Coordinator Lisa Elliott said it's crucial that children are able to read well by third grade — otherwise, they are likely to fall behind as they get older.

"From kindergarten to third grade, kids are learning to read," she said. "After that, they're reading to learn."

The SMART program began 10 years ago when former Oregon Gov. Neil Goldschmidt discovered statistics that showed children who read are more likely to graduate, and are ultimately more literate as adults, Elliott said. Goldschmidt formed the Oregon Children's Foundation with a mission "to enhance the reading skills, attitudes and life prospects of children who need assistance."

The program started with only a few schools in Portland, but today more than 10,000 kids are involved in Oregon and 26 schools participate in Lane County alone, Elliott said.

Teachers select the children who will be part of the SMART program, most of whom have low reading ability and have little access to books at home, she said.

She added that SMART volunteers don't teach children how to read. They volunteer their time to support the children and make reading a positive experience.

"A lot of kids don't have any appreciation for reading," Elliott said. "We're not here to tutor them — we're here to communicate a joy for reading."

On campus, sororities and fraternities are introducing another literacy program — for an even younger group of children. Last summer, EMU Child Care Coordinator Dennis Reynolds received a grant from the Starbucks Foundation, which has provided books for seven University child care classrooms. The Starbucks Readers program is a joint program with the Office of Greek Life. Starbucks Reader program Coordinator Kainoa Sandberg said she plans to have volunteers reading in the classrooms by next Monday.

The Starbucks Readers Program began a pilot program last fall, but the program will really get under way this term, Reynolds said. He

said he hopes the program will be a "value both to children and to the student (volunteers) who participate who will learn skills to interact with kids."

Sandberg, the coordinator for the Starbucks Reader Program, said she already has the volunteers she needs, but she expects the program will grow in the future.

The senior planning, public policy and management major said volunteers will begin reading to the children in classrooms — ranging from toddlers to pre-kindergarten — next week. On Saturday, Feb. 23, the 18th Avenue Starbucks will also host a reading event open to all children — in the daycare or not — and their parents. They are invited to come have hot chocolate and participate in a reading session with several of the program's volunteers.

Elliott said kids in the SMART program not only become more comfortable with reading, but they also have fun.

"There is a kind of rumbly sound of kids and readers altogether in the same room," she said. "It's the most beautiful sound."

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