

Read Across America brings Governor Kitzhaber to Maplewood School

By Polina Olsen
The Southwest Portland Post

Mrs. Liberty Looney's fourth-grade class was ready for the governor's visit. The Maplewood Elementary School teacher has organized "Read Across America" at the school for 11 years. Held annually on March 2, the program celebrates Dr. Seuss' birthday and the joy of reading. "All children are reading or being read to. That is the goal," Looney said.

Planning for "Read Across America" begins in December when Looney sends out 70 invitations asking people to visit the school. "We usually have 15 to 20 guests," she said. "We've had three chiefs of police, Mark Kroeger, Rosie Sizer and Mike Reese, who is a Maplewood parent."

Mark Mason, the 1190 KEX radio announcer for the Trailblazers, usually comes but he couldn't make it this year. "We've had authors like April Henry and people from the Oregon Zoo and OMSI," explained Looney.

"Four members of Station 18 firehouse visited the kindergarten. The kids can understand firefighters better than city commissioners."

Maplewood students keep track of their reading during the month of February. "They write their name on a raffle ticket every time they finish a book," Looney said. "I draw out names. This year, close to 70 children got a free book."

On March 2, Gov. John Kitzhaber read *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*, which he said was one of his own

son's favorites. "In addition to someone reading to the kids, the children ask about their jobs," Looney said.


"The governor had time for two questions. The first was, 'What's it like being governor?' He said it was a great job. The second was, 'Is there anything you can't do because you're governor?' Not really, he said. [On second thought] the governor said he has people from *The Oregonian* follow him around so he has to be on his best behavior. He can't eat with his fingers."




Governor John Kitzhaber reads to Maplewood School students as part of Read Across America. (Post photo by Polina Olsen)

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