Classroom Books For Change serves local schools

■ By Kirby Neumann-Rea Columbia Gorge News

UIETLY, DURING THE pandemic, parents on both sides of the Columbia River raised funds independently to expand horizons in classrooms in Hood River and White Salmon.

At its start, the Classroom Books For Change project yielded more than \$6,000 for Hood River County schools, through 71 donations, allowing organizer Denice Bukanovsky to work with schools to purchase books from Black, Latino and Indigenous perspectives for every elementary classroom and libraries in Hood River County School District. It's about 600 books, with more to come, all selected by teachers.

She's expanded the monetary goal and has plans to create a statewide foundation to help other schools do the same.

"I wanted to do something that will help truly work toward change," Bukanovsky told the Hood River County School Board in a recent meeting, where she was honored for her project.

'What Denice did was contagious, in a good way," said District Curriculum Director Bill Newton, formerly Westside Elementary principal through the 2019-20 school year, when Bukanovsky developed the project.

Much of the fundraising happened through the Go Fund Me/ Classroom Books for Change account, which is still live and accepting donations.

"It really has been the highlight of my year," Bukanovsky said. "It is a project the kids have helped me with, too," referring to her daughter and son, who are in high school and middle school.

But Bukanovsky's outreach went beyond Hood River; she contacted parents Dale Pytel and Lee Lloyd in White Salmon, who are duplicating the same effort there.

"Lee worked with a teacher who submitted a request to the education foundation and they funded another \$3,000. Lee and Dale coordinated with the schools and purchased books through Waucoma exclusively. Their efforts ignited

garden. Unfortunately, Martina spent almost all of that money every

week building up her sticker collection.

Martina's neighbor moved away last month. Martina's bike got a flat tire and she doesn't

have the money to get it replaced. She now

wishes she had saved money in a Rainy-Day

Can you think of a time when you

could have used a Rainy-Day

Fund jar of your own?

Fund jar like her cousin Tomas.

one of the teachers, and she requested money from White Salmon Education Foundation, which is very active and many community members go directly to them and

Bukanovsky it's pretty seam-

less," Bukanovsky said. "It was a wonderful success in White Salmon," Pytel said. "We were able to raise close to \$1,600 from private donors and due to the community support, we received a generous donation from the White Šalmon Education Foundation. So far, we have purchased hundreds of books for Whitson and the intermediate school. And have plans to purchase more in the near future. The books were requested by the teachers. It's an honor to be a part of getting these important and beautiful books in the hands of our children."

Bukanovsky said that after George Floyd and the protests gained momentum, "I felt like I wanted to do something productive and change hearts and minds of kids. They can learn in two places, in the home and school. And I wanted to find a place to impact them for years to come.

Bukanovsky said the books selected "intend to develop pride in racial diversity and compassion and understanding of others." Bukanovsky's long-term goal is to create a foundation and expand the project statewide, if not nationwide. She has an immediate \$10,000 goal for Hood River County schools. Donations are still welcome — at gofund.me/f6c659bf — and anything exceeding the goal places many welcome titles in the elementary schools and expands the project into the middle schools, where she was unable to fill all the teacher requests.

"Friends in other communities out of state reached out and we'll see where it goes," Bukanovsky said. "It can certainly be a wonderful thing for our kids, for years to

Anyone wishing to contact her about making a direct donation



Sample books purchased by Hood River and White Salmon volunteers for local schools' classrooms and libraries. **Denice Bukanovsky photo**

can do so at classroombooksforchange@gmail.com.

Many books for the upper valley are Spanish translations or Spanish originals, and many books received Caldecott, Newbery Medal, Coretta Scott King and Pura Belpre awards. She focused the collection on Black, Latino and Indigenous topics and authors, as well as multi-racial authors and illustrators.

Roughly half the books are in Spanish or relate to the Hispanic experience.

"I think a lot of the Hispanic stories are going to resonate," she said. "There a lot of beautiful stories that, for the Hispanic community, I want to feel empowered, and for the white community, I want to feel a sense of understanding.

"I wanted to make it very clear to our community these were not books I was choosing. The premise and scope I chose, but the teachers chose the books."

She started at Westside Elementary, where her kids had attended.

'It started with me emailing one teacher, and I thought, 'I can buy books for all the teachers, starting with Westside only, and with the goal that if that was quickly funded, ľ would expand it," Bukanovsky said. "And within two days I had \$700, just through emailing and texting, and I knew."

She expanded the goal to \$6,000, and emailed all principals to ask teachers if they wanted Black, Latino and Indigenous stories "that develop compassion and head us down the road to social justice, and immediately, I got an expansive list from Westside teachers and shared with principals a sample list and a reading list from a middle school

teacher, and there was such quick response and they were very enthusiastic, so I knew I had to make my goal of getting the money then, so I worked all summer (2020), one contact at a time."

Help came via proceeds from organized events involving donated auction items, as well as individual donations — many word-of-mouth and a Hood River Rotary gift.

Bukanovsky spent \$3,000 at Waucoma Bookstore in Hood River and researched Black-owned bookstores in the Bay Area and Tulsa. On May 21, the Oklahoma town observes the 100th anniversary of the 1921 massacre of more than 100 Black citizens and destruction by white mobs of the Greenwood district.

See BOOKS, page 11

Kid Scoop Together:

'Save for a rainy day" is an

idiom. An idiom is a phrase

that doesn't literally mean what

it says. Work with a parent to

write the number of each idiom's definition in the circles.

Idioms

Back to the drawing board

Missed the boat

Fit as a fiddle

Costs an arm and a leg

Wild goose chase

Piece of cake

1. In good health

3. Starting over

2. Just barely achieving

4. Something very expensive

5. A task that's easy to do

6. Lost an opportunity

7. A rare occurance

8. A pointless activity

Once in a blue moon

By the skin of your teeth

Definitions



My Rainy-Day

Fund Pledge

my rainy-day fund each week.

This money will come from:

Allowance

☐ A weekly chore

A weekly job

Other __

Expanded

Numbers

Look through the

newspaper for five

4-digit numbers. Rewrite each one

in an expanded

form using words

instead of digits.

For example:

4,862

FOUR thousand

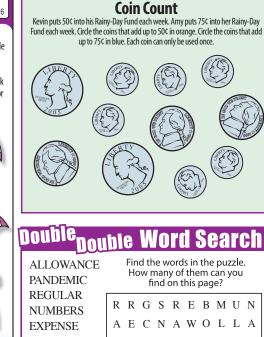
eight hundred

SIXTY two.

Standards Link: Math: Write out number amount

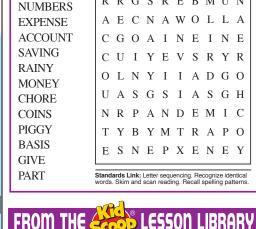






Kid Scoop Puzzler 👞







many as you can in one long sentence.

Standards Link: Vocabulary Development: Identify adjectives.



chores? What kind of jobs do you do?



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