

Contest Supplies 1,400 Books Just in Time for Christmas!



Girl Scout Troop 332 won the First 5 Halloween Used Book Drive Contest by collecting 670 volumes with the help of Altrusa of the Eastern Sierra. These books are available to children of all ages at free Reading Railroad depots throughout the county. A map of all depot locations can be found at www.inyocounty.us/first5.

By Jody Veenker

Parents looking for a financial break during this debt-inducing holiday season take note! Free books, many featuring your children's favorite characters and subjects, are available year round through the Reading Railroad program, and Thanksgiving and Christmas are a wonderful time to take advantage of this great resource.

"You can help children understand and anticipate holidays simply by reading with them," says First 5 Commissioner Randee Arcularius. "Now is the perfect time to read a book about being grateful or giving to others, especially when you can secure holiday books for free, thanks to the efforts of groups like Girls Scouts who collected 670 books!"

Another group contributing to the Reading Railroad book drive was last year's winner, Big Pine State Preschool, who collected 259 books. Individuals put on quite a show, too: Holly Nyland brought in 229 books, and Lacey Pauling rustled up 226. Their efforts not only extend the use of the books they collect, but also make it easier for families to give children a strong start in life.

Studies show that children who are read to daily do better in school, are more likely to attend college, and secure a high paying job. Babies who are introduced to language and books by loving caretakers during their first year of development show a variety of benefits in brain development, ranging from social and physical development stimulated by the comfort of being held, touched, and talked to, to increased linguistic and listening development. Multiple studies conducted by organizations like the American Pediatric Association have concluded that the most important thing you can do to prepare your child for later success in school and life is read to them daily.

Experts say that a “language-rich environment” consisting of lots of loving attention, conversational engagement, and daily reading stimulates positive brain development in a way that flash card or video reading programs can’t reproduce.

Bishop Reading Railroad sites include Mountain High Video, Raymond's Deli, and the First 5 office across the street from the post office by WIC at 568 W. Line Street. Children are welcome to take books home from any of these locations at any time they please, and they can also drop off their own used books at the blue train boxes as well.

“It takes continual donations to make a program like this work,” says Jean Turner, Director of Inyo County Health & Human Services, and First 5 Inyo Commissioner. “And it really says something positive about our community that so many children are learning to pass on the literature they outgrow, and to expect interesting, fresh books in return.”