

Rotarians for Reading!

Rotarians around the world recognize March as Rotary Literacy Month. With that in mind, Ames Rotarians have launched a new literacy project called “Workplace Reading Corners.” In early March 2008 a “book-friendly” area appeared in the lobby of First National Bank located at 405 5th Street. Rotarian and Bank President Scott Bauer volunteered FNB’s lobby to be the first workplace to host the traveling literacy display. After a couple weeks, the display moved to the lobby of the U.S. Bank at 405 Main Street. In the months ahead other Rotarians will host the display for the pleasure of their employees and customers with young children.

The “Workplace Reading Corner” display was prepared by the Ames Morning Rotary Club. It features photos of Ames area Rotarians engaged in local, state and international service projects related to childhood literacy. There is also a rocking chair, a basket of books, and a carpet to invite adults and young children to sit for a moment and enjoy reading together.

Shown in the picture, Tom Pohlman, Chairman of Ames National Corporation and a member of Ames Noon Rotary Club, visits with Anderson Fife, a 2-year-old who discovered the “Workplace Reading Corner” with she came to the bank to visit her grandmother Tanya Anderson, FNB Vice-President and member of Ames Morning Rotary Club.

Rotarians have found there are many benefits to making these books available to young visitors in public waiting rooms. The Rotarians have created an attractive reading corner in a public place welcoming families and reminding them that our community values literacy. When books are widely available, busy parents can take advantage of brief opportunities to read with their children. Minutes add up to hours of learning, and time spent reading together strengthens bonds between parents and children.



Ames Rotarians have earned a reputation for being leaders in promoting early literacy by sharing their dollars, time, and creative messages. Another of their ongoing service projects is to support the “Reach Out and Read” program in Story County which is co-sponsored by the McFarland Clinic and the Raising Readers organization. Through this program Ames Morning Rotary provides funds for all of the books that doctors give to children at their 6-month checkup (*Baby Faces* series). And their counterpart, Ames Noon Rotary, funds the books for the 2-year checkup.

At the state level, Ames Rotarians are leading the “Reach Out and Read” campaign. This is an effort to raise \$30,000 to provide books to R.O.R. programs serving 12,000 children of Iowa at-risk families. Internationally, Ames Rotarians have contributed books to start-up libraries in Mexico and Guatemala.

The Rotarians have continually promoted literacy in Ames. For three months in 2007, Morning Rotary placed weekly ads in the Ames Daily Tribune that featured local Rotarians “Caught in the Act of Reading.” The club also created a moving billboard, “Joy of Reading: Build Relationships, Build Minds – Read to a Child” that was featured on the back of Cy-Ride busses. Additionally, Ames Rotary volunteers have contributed their time to visit parents of newborn babies, read to young children in waiting rooms, and helped in elementary school classrooms.

The “Workplace Reading Corner” is only one of the ways that Ames Morning Rotarians are promoting early childhood literacy throughout the Ames community.