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## Lake County Journal (Grayslake, IL)

December 20, 2010  
Section: Local

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### Books make perfect Christmas gifts for students

COLIN SELBO

WAUKEGAN – Christmas came early to students at Clearview Elementary School. The nearly 800 students at the Waukegan school received a visit Dec. 17 from Bernie's Book Bank of Libertyville and the United Way of the Lake County.

Volunteers with the two organizations distributed books to eager and smiling children, some of which could not wait to start reading the stories inside their new gifts.

"I think they're amazing," third-grader Ruben Macias said. "I like the pictures and I like the words they have."

Each child at the school received six books, which hopefully will go a long way towards encouraging the students to read on their own time away from school, said Brian Floriani, director of Bernie's Book Bank.

"They are hungry for it," Floriani said. "You can see by their reaction they want to read."

Clearview was one of nine schools in Waukegan Public School District 60 that received donated books from the book bank throughout December.

Ninety percent of students in the district come from families in poverty, said Kristi Long, CEO and President of United Way of Lake County. Students from those families are less likely to be exposed to reading materials at home, s said.

"Most high-poverty households have less than three books at home," she said.

Turning students into readers is a cycle that requires a student to read for pleasure at home, Clearview Principal Jose Lara said. Not having books at home often is the missing piece of that cycle for students from low-income families, he said.

When students read books for a school assignment they get exposed to new vocabulary. But the same is true when students read for pleasure, Lara said, and it can have additional benefits in a child's academic development.

"One of the keys to comprehension and fluency is reading for pleasure," Lara said. "The more they read, the better they become."

Plans call for volunteers to distribute books again before the end of the school year so students in District 60 will have more books to read during the summer.

Bernie's Book Bank has distributed 140,000 books in the last 12 months, and hopes to push its donation total to one million books by 2013, Floriani said.

But the book bank can never have too many books, Floriani said.

"People have to be pro-active [in donating books]," he said.

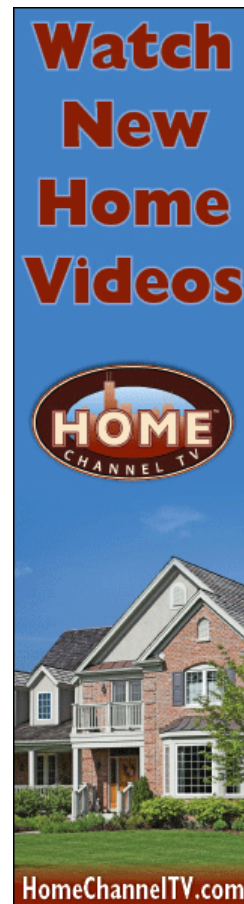
Count the children at Clearview as among the students who would take whatever books they can get their hands on.

"For some, those books might be the only presents they receive," Lara said.

To learn more:

Visit [www.berniesbookbank.org](http://www.berniesbookbank.org) for information about donating books to the book bank. Third grade students Jose Flores, Yeimy Martinez and Ivette Atempa look over books they received Dec. 17. Students at Clearview Elementary School in Waukegan each were given six books by volunteers with the Bernie's Book Bank and the United Way of the Lake County. FRONT PAGE PHOTO: Second-grader Lazaro Cuatzilt reads a donated book Dec. 17. (Colin Selbo – [cselbo@lakecountyjournal.com](mailto:cselbo@lakecountyjournal.com))

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- I am glad that Chicago will not host the Olympics. It would have been bad financially.
- It doesn't matter to me either way.
- Other.

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