

Donated children's books help to 'Page it Forward'

6/23
triblocal

By Megan Craig
TRIBLOCAL REPORTER

Less than 40 percent of 6-year-olds in Waukegan have had any contact with books before starting kindergarten, according to a 2010 United Way of Lake County kindergarten readiness survey.

And according to the U.S. Department of Education, 61 percent of low-income homes have no age-appropriate reading materials for children.

That's why United Way of Lake County and Bernie's Book Bank are banding together to create the country's largest book drive. Called "Page it Forward," the campaign will strive to collect 100,000 books during the summer for low-income Lake County children, according to Jennifer Yonan, vice president of marketing and donor relations for UWLC.

UWLC programs focus on literacy, especially in early readers, Yonan said.

"We're really critically looking at making sure kids have access to books," she said.

Third-grade reading scores have been used to predict everything from high school graduation rates to potential prison popula-

tions, she said.

"We really want to impact the reading levels of kids around Lake County, and we thought this book drive would be a great opportunity over the summer where we could collect books ... and distribute them back to low-income families," she said. "We thought this would be a good way to engage the entire community."

Kids could gather wagons full of books from neighbors, buy books at rummage sales or clean off their own bookshelves, she said.

Each low-income child will get a bag of six age-appropriate books, distributed by Bernie's Book Bank.

"This summer-long celebration of reading will help to unite children needing books with books needing children," said Brian Floriani, founder and director of Bernie's Book Bank. "Children grow out of books as quickly as they grow out of shoes, so the supply of quality used children's books is nearly limitless."

"It's a great way to get kids more interested in reading," Yonan said.

PLEASE SEE **BOOKS**, PAGE 10

Books

FROM PAGE 10

Books will be collected at five sites during events the rest of the summer:

- Tuesday, July 12, noon to 9 p.m. – at Independence Grove, 16400 W. Buckley Road in Libertyville (set to coincide with the park's Tuesday night concert series)
- Wednesday, July 20, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. – at United Conveyer, 2100 Norman Drive West, Waukegan
- Sunday, Aug. 14, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. – at Gurnee Days, 4398 Old Grand Ave., Gurnee
- Wednesday, Aug. 24, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. – at EH Wachs, 600 Knightsbridge

Parkway, Lincolnshire

- Sunday, Sept. 11, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. – at the Farmers Market, 951 McHenry Road, Buffalo Grove

And adding a contemporary twist to the traditional book drive, United Way is asking community members to "like" the Page it Forward Facebook page. For every "like," Harris Bank will donate a dollar for new books to donate.

Visit www.uwlakeco.org/pageitforward or www.facebook.com/pageitforward for more information or to "like" the program's Facebook page.

Follow UWLC on Twitter, @Unitedway-lakeco, and use hashtag #pageitforward when tweeting about the program.
mecraig@tribune.com