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Young readers get books galore

NEWS-SUN STAFF REPORT

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United Way of Lake County and its volunteers began distributing 26,262 books to students in nine Waukegan schools Thursday.

The United Way teamed up with Bernie's Book Bank to distribute six books to each child at city elementary schools and preschools before the holidays. On Thursday, books were distributed at Carman-Buckner School.

Brian Floriani of Lake Forest, Bernie's Book Bank founder and executive director, said he believes children should receive as many books as possible throughout their childhood.

"In providing books to students, we not only provide them with the reading material to galvanize their love for reading, but create a book ambassador in each child," Floriani said. The goal is "to improve literacy by ensuring that all children go home to good, quality reading material."

Last year, United Way of Lake County and Bernie's Book Bank distributed 11,400 books to 1,900 students in Waukegan schools. They plan to more than double the distribution this year.

"As I watched the kids showing their new books to their fellow students I thought, 'Now, this is what the joy of reading is all about.' What a pleasure to work with Bernie's Book Bank to share the joy of books with these kids," said Lynn Tracy, United Way community engagement manager.

Founded in 2006, Bernie's Book Bank has distributed more than 89,607 books throughout the region. It is always looking for donations of new or gently used books. Donations can be dropped off at United Way's offices at 330 S. Greenleaf St., Gurnee.

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