

David Crockett Elementary Smart-Start Book Drive and 100 Day Reading Challenge



*Stormy Lester
David Crockett Elementary School PTA*

As this was my last of seven years involved with the David Crockett Elementary PTA, I wanted to use my current position as VP-Programs to coordinate our first annual Smart-Start Book Drive plus 100 Day reading challenge in honor of Texas PTA's 100th birthday. It was a blessing to share my love of reading with many children at our school who might not have access to books at home. With great joy, this program has taken on a life and spirit that I never dreamed when I announced my modest desire to collect 500 books to Stacia Runnels (PTA President), Mrs. Lara Cavin (Principal) and our PTA board.

With overwhelming school support, our collection of books was planned for three separate Fridays with reminder note and update going home each of the following Tuesdays. We announced an incentive of a movie party for one class at each grade level that donated the most books.

I collected an impressive 362 books on the first Friday. The note I sent home with the number of books donated per teacher must have spurred on the competitive spirit of our children ... I COLLECTED AND COUNTED 1782 books the second Friday! The last Friday brought over 1800 more books for myself and Karen Bickerdike, VP-Membership, to collect, with a final total of 4,169 books. An overwhelming amount of books donated were mint condition: Dr. Seuss, high quality Scholastic and chapter books.

Sorting more than 4000 books is an enormous task! I

had the wonderful assistance of five members of our PTA executive board with their children, two parent volunteers, twelve education interns from East Texas Baptist University and my own two sons (ages 10 and 11) to conduct the mammoth sorting of books by gender and grade level.



Members of our PTA executive board with their children, volunteers and education interns from East Texas Baptist University (Marshall) sorted more than 4000 books.

Sorted books for elementary school children were distributed to our own Crockett kids who the teachers had privately identified as being from disadvantaged homes or difficult circumstances. Each child received nine to sixteen books depending on the donations at that grade level. Extra books were distributed to other elementary schools in Marshall ISD to serve their children in need.

The books appropriate for children up to age three were donated to the Marshall office of Early Childhood Intervention (state agency providing therapy and resource services to children with developmental delays or special needs). All pre-K books were donated to Marshall ISD

Washington Early Childhood campus serving Pre-K, Head Start and Pre-school Program for Children with Disabilities. Kathleen Dancy, PPCD teacher, was absolutely thrilled when I had the pleasure of personally delivering 434 books to the Washington campus. She pulled out board books that would be developmentally appropriate for





Stormy Lester (VP-Programs, Smart-Start Coordinator), Lara Cavin (Principal) & Stacia Runnels (PTA President) along with our Crockett kids and a handful of the 4,169 books collected.

many of her children with significant special needs. When she found a ‘Silly Sally Board’ book, she smiled with delight. Ms. Dancy shared that she plays the song often as the children transition between centers but can’t leave the book out for the children because of fear that it would be torn up. It was that moment when I knew that our hard work was a labor of love!

At the conclusion of our book drive, one classroom in each of the five grade levels was treated to a movie party hosted by our PTA to reward them for donating the most books.

On Wednesday, February 4, David Crockett Elementary School began our 100 Day Reading Challenge to help celebrate the 100th birthday of Texas PTA! All Crockett children received a calendar to be used at home to record days the child reads a minimum of fifteen minutes either individually or with a family member. Calendars were used Wednesday, February 4, to Thursday, May 14. All children who read a minimum of 90 of the 100 days will be rewarded at the end of the school year with a certificate and door prize drawings.

After hearing of our success, David Crockett Elementary Smart-Start Book Drive was featured on KTBS Channel 3 (Shreveport, LA) as well as in a front-page article in the Marshall News Messenger. Faculty, staff and PTA board members received positive comments about our effort and the school’s giving spirit in our community after the positive publicity.



One of collection carts from day one of the book drive. This cart is from only one hallway; the other two hallways in the school were also collecting books on this day.