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2008 Angel Awards

Nonprofit of the Year

Spread the Word Nevada

By Jeannette Green Davies

Special Publications writer

Putting a book into a child's hands "for keeps" — a child who has probably never owned a book before — produces an expression of awe and disbelief. Spread the Word Nevada is happy to put that look on the faces of young people throughout the Las Vegas Valley.

Spread the Word Nevada is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to advancing early childhood literacy through a number of programs. The organization's

flagship program, Kids to Kids, provides books for young people in some of Nevada's most economically challenged communities. "Leveling the playing field for these kids through education gives them a chance to break the cycle of poverty," said Lisa Habighorst, the program's executive director and a former teacher, who credits founder and former school librarian, Laurie Hartig, for the program's success.

So far, the organization has put awe-filled smiles on the faces of more than 92,000 children and their families by providing at-risk young people with books to encourage reading, self-confidence and the pride of ownership. By year's end, the nonprofit organization will have distributed more than one million books to kids in 16 local schools.

Young people, prekindergarten through fifth grade are given new and gently used books to develop their own "keep at home" libraries. The program's objective is to enhance reading

abilities and to instill an appreciation for reading during the formative stages of children's lives.

Each spring, the organization adopts two more schools and provides tote bags for each child to fill with five books. Then once a month, the program representative visits the school so the kids can add yet another book to their collection.

Since its 2001 inception, word has spread about the organization and folks aren't just talking. People of all ages and corporations of all sizes have banded together to lend a hand. Barnes and Nobel bookstore and Harper Collins publishers have donated overstocked books. Harrah's employees, seniors and volunteer organizations clean the used books if needed.

Young people themselves organize book drives for sister schools and happily pass along books they've read to other kids. "Community involvement, in the spirit of giving back, is what makes our program work," Habighorst said.

Breakfast With Books and Books & Buddies are two more highly effective



Laurie Hartig (left) and Lisa Habighorst



Spread the Word programs that bring people of all ages together in the spirit of reading. Breakfast With Books encourages young people to read in partnership with their families. Each month, students and their parents, grandparents, guardians and siblings are invited to share breakfast and storytelling at the elementary schools the organization serves.

Books & Buddies was created to partner volunteers from Southern Nevada's senior centers, businesses and communities with young people who attend at-risk elementary schools. Volunteer/student partnerships focus on further developing reading proficiency.

Owning books is a critical factor in every child's intellectual development. Young people who own books often read them over and over again and memorize the stories. Repetition and memorization are early stages in the learning-to-read process.

The organization's homegrown, organic and thrifty methodology allows them to place at least 1,500 books a month into children's hands — a huge accomplishment for an organization that doesn't have an office.

In addition to working with at-risk schools, Spread the Word also provides books to local charity organizations such as Child Haven, Safe Nest, S.A.F.E. House, St. Jude's Ranch, CASA foster care program and others.

Spread the Word Nevada forecasts the need to adopt 53 more schools into their program. For these schools, it's just a matter of time, but Habighorst vows that once a school is adopted, no child will leave without a book in hand.





Spread the Word Nevada

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Executive Director

Lisa Habighorst

Our Mission

Spread the Word Nevada: Kids to Kids is dedicated to advancing early childhood literacy by placing books into the hands and homes of children within Southern Nevada's at-risk, low-income communities.

Our Goals

Through community collaboration, mentorship and family-partnership programs, Spread the Word Nevada fosters reading and language development leading to brighter academic and economic futures for at-risk children. We are dedicated to reaching beyond the 16 schools we serve to include the 53 additional at-risk schools in our valley.

Year Established

2001

Service Area

Low-income children and their families attending at-risk schools throughout Southern Nevada.

Sponsored By



Spread the Word Nevada

Fundraising opportunities

Storybook gala

- Night of celebration is held in September of each year. Sponsorships, tables and individual seats are available. Spread the Word Nevada receives 100 percent of the proceeds.

Pennies for Pages read-a-thon

- Sponsor a child, a class, or an entire school as they pledge to read each day

during Nevada Reading Week.

Race a Bed to Read

- Corporate and community teams push decorated beds on wheels, competing for the fastest times and most creative decoration themes.

Gift of reading

- During the holiday season, make a donation in honor of each person on your gift list. Spread the Word Nevada

will then purchase a book to be dedicated and given to an at-risk child within our community.

Celebrations club

- As you celebrate anniversaries, weddings, birthdays, bar/bat mitzvot, baptisms, or holidays, our Celebrations Club makes it easy to commemorate your special event with a donation.

Volunteer opportunities

Books & Buddies reading mentor

- Partner with a child to help improve their reading and language skills.

Breakfast with books volunteer

- Assist at a monthly family-literacy event at one of the 16 schools that we serve.

Book drive volunteer

- Organize a book drive at your place of work, community group meeting or child's school.

Special events volunteer

- Assist with event set up and clean up as well as distribute books and information.

Giving opportunities

\$25,000 — Sponsor a school

- Allows Spread the Word to adopt an additional at-risk school for one year
- Provides books for each child's home, family-literacy program and tutoring opportunities for all students enrolled

\$15,000 — Kids to Kids sponsorship

- Supports the Kids to Kids program at one at-risk school for a year
- Includes book bags and monthly book distributions for each child

\$10,000 Breakfast with Books sponsorship

- Supports Breakfast with Books at one at-risk school for a year

- Includes monthly story time, book distributions, breakfast and raffle prizes for each child and their family

\$5,000 Books and Buddies sponsorship

- Supports Books and Buddies at one at-risk school for a year

\$2,500 Book Drive sponsorship

- Offers individual, in-school tutoring
- Supports community-wide book drives for one year

\$250 Legacy of Literacy

- Yearly gift sponsors one child on all of our programs

Board of Directors

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Inspire a Child.

GIVE THE GIFT OF READING.



Spread the Word
Nevada



Kids to Kids

Spread the Word Nevada: Kids to Kids

is a literacy initiative that places books into the hands and homes of at-risk children in Southern Nevada. Learn more about becoming a donor or volunteer today.

Visit SpreadtheWordNevada.org, call (702) 564-7809
or e-mail info@SpreadtheWordNevada.org

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