

August 10, 2012

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JUDITH'S READING ROOM HELPS LOW-INCOME CHILDREN COMBAT "SUMMER SLIDE" BY GIVING BOOKS TO HISPANIC CENTER'S SUMMER PROGRAM

Judith's Reading Room and Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley collaborate to promote literacy amongst at-risk youth. The donation will help prevent summer learning loss by giving books to keep forever.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bethlehem, PA (August 10, 2012) – Judith's Reading Room, a nonprofit literacy organization based in Bethlehem, donated today a collection of 220 books to Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley's summer program, which provides low-income children with both academic and recreational activities. The donation is comprised of hand-selected elementary books and is valued at \$1,137. Children in the program will be presented with the books during today's awards ceremony as a gift to recognize their hard work in the program.

The donation is the joint effort of Judith's Reading Room and the Hispanic Center to reduce "summer slide," or the loss of skill, knowledge, and motivation acquired during the school year due to the lack of practice over the summer.

The effects of idle brains during the summer are profound. According to the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), children who do not keep up with reading lose approximately "two months, or 22% of the school year" of instructional time. When school starts in the fall, teachers are forced to spend at least a month re-teaching what students have forgotten. If students come from low-income families, the summer slide is even greater: the NSLA reports that low-income children lose more than two months in reading achievement because they do not have access to books.

"Studies show that differential progress made during summers between 2nd and 6th grades can account for up to 80% of achievement differences between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. Getting elementary students to read just 4-5 books during the summer is powerful enough to prevent a decline in reading achievement scores from the spring to the fall. Helping our children gain access to books during the summer can make all the difference between whether the child succeeds or fails at school," said Lorna Velázquez, Executive Director, Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley.

Through the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, the Hispanic Center has partnered with Lehigh Valley Dual Language Charter School and Holy Infancy School to offer academic, enrichment and recreational activities to their students with their summer program. Offered Monday through Friday for 5 weeks during the summer, the

goal of the program is to improve academics, address school attendance and minimize behavioral issues. A total of 44 children, entering grades kindergarten to sixth, benefit from the program.

The goal of the customized collection is to give low-income Lehigh Valley children the opportunity to continue reading during the month before school begins and arrive 'ready to learn.' Judith's Reading Room will gift each child five books, carefully chosen based on grade level, at the end of the awards ceremony. The 220 elementary-level books were obtained by Judith's Reading Room through book drives and purchased through a grant from The Rider-Pool Fund. In an effort to provide high-quality literature, the donation includes several Newberry Award-winning books, such as *Bridge to Terabithia*, as well as books from notable children's authors like Louis Sachar and Judy Blume.

"We hope that the donation to the Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley will get children reading more during the summer and start school on an equal playing field in the fall," said Scott Leiber, Co-Founder, Judith's Reading Room.

"It is exciting, as a teacher, to begin the school year with students who have continued to read throughout the summer. The standard skills review is noticeably shortened, new material can be introduced earlier, and student self-esteem and achievement is enhanced," said Connie Firing, retired teacher from Bangor Area High School. She added, "Summer reading provides a win-win situation for all involved."

Judith's Reading Room promotes "Freedom Through Literature" by providing custom libraries to organizations that serve people who, for any reason, have limited or no access to literature. The organization was established in 2010 to honor the memory of Judith F. Krug, a champion of the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech. "Judith's Reading Room is our interpretation of spreading freedom through literacy by providing custom libraries, at no cost to organizations, with the goal to enrich lives through the simple act of reading," said Leiber. Including today's donation, Judith's Reading Room has donated 31 libraries: 24 mobile and 8 permanent libraries in five states and in four countries. The libraries contain more than 34,000 books valued at nearly \$379,000 both here and abroad.

For more information, please visit www.judithsreadingroom.org.

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