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The Almanac

Second-graders get bookcases, books

This report is from Pete Verral, who does community outreach for the Los Altos-based Hoopoe Books Share Literacy Program.

To help avert the loss over the summer of academic gains achieved during the school year, second-grade students at Costano Elementary School in East Palo Alto are getting a little help from their friends: On Wednesday, May 27, each child will be presented with a bookcase filled with age-appropriate summer reading to take home, courtesy of three community organizations.

To jump-start the celebration of summer reading, author Sally Mallam, director of Hoopoe Books Share Literacy Program, will read to the students from "Dende Maro: The Golden Prince," her recently published children's book inspired by the ancient rock art of Africa. Hoopoe Books donated 40 copies of "Dende Maro" to the Costano students.

Joan Green, reading specialist with the Jewish Coalition for Literacy, will conduct a literacy training session for the parents of the children receiving bookcases. The program will be conducted in English and Spanish and will give parents the opportunity to learn and practice reading techniques to bolster their children's language development.

With a majority of students from poor and low-income immigrant families, Costano has many parents who are not fluent in English, do not have books at home, and are unable to encourage the love of reading so strongly correlated with later success in school and life.

Congregation Beth Am, East Palo Alto Kids Foundation, and the JCL have supported reading at Costano for the last two years and collaborated to develop the give-away program they hope will keep kids reading over the summer and throughout their lifetimes.