

Afghan Stories Help Area Children Learn To Read

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Contributed

Higher Horizons children ages 2-5 with teacher Archella Dorsey at Family Pajama Literacy Night, which was attended by 24 families, who brought more than 30 children.

Two folktales that have delighted young and old for centuries in Afghanistan have become part of an innovative program to teach literacy and thinking skills to disadvantaged children at the Higher Horizons Day Care Center in Falls Church.

"The Farmer's Wife" and "The Lion Who Saw Himself in the Water," both by the Afghan author Idries Shah, are based on traditional Afghan stories that have been favorites for centuries throughout Central Asia and the Middle East and have been well-received in the U.S. since their publication in 1998 by California-based Hoopoe Books (www.hoopoekids.com).

In late January, 23 Higher Horizons teachers and aides received professional development training in the effective use of "The Farmer's Wife" to develop reading and thinking skills, along with a curriculum guide of related activities for classroom use.

This spring, in Phase 2 of the project, the school's teaching staff is working with "The Lion Who Saw Himself in the Water," and children will receive a Home Literacy Kit containing a book, CD and newsletter of that story.

Established in 1963, Higher Horizons (www.higherhorizons.org) serves 224 children from the lowest-income families of very diverse backgrounds in the Bailey's Crossroads and Falls Church communities of Fairfax County.



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