

CELEBRATIONS

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Celebrating? We want to hear from you! If you know of someone achieving a milestone in their life – a marriage, an anniversary, a scholarship, an honor – please let us know by sending an e-mail to celebrations@examiner.com.



Children, parents and teachers across the country have benefited from Hoopoe Books Share Literacy, which provides instruction and learning materials to classrooms and families. With the help of a \$90,000 grant from Kaiser Permanente, the Bay Area chapter will launch later this month, and will benefit more than 3,700 children. – Courtesy photos

Literacy program receives \$90,000 grant



New Bay Area program to benefit more than 3,700 disadvantaged children

This fall, more than 3,700 disadvantaged kids from the Bay Area and Northern California will take part in an innovative literacy program that promotes reading and at-home learning with books that feature a cast of centuries-old characters from around the world.

The Hoopoe Books Share Literacy Program will launch in the Bay Area this September through a \$90,000 grant from the Kaiser Permanente Community Grants Program. The nation-wide literacy program comes at no cost to participating families.

"We want to help kids who don't have books," Sally Mallam, director of Share Literacy, said. "The greatest indicator of how a child will do in school is the presence of books in the home. For many kids, there is no emphasis on books from the ages of 3 and 5. And for many of the less fortunate, there is little reading between parents and their children on a regular basis."

Based on the rich tradition of storytelling — stories told and retold to children by campfire and candlelight — the program's books are based on traditional stories from Afghanistan,

Central Asia and the Middle East.

"Literacy skills are fundamental to future success and are related to future health outcomes, as well as career success and family well-being," Dr. David Sobel, regional director of Patient Education and Health Promotion for Kaiser Permanente Northern California, said.

"People with higher levels of education have lower death rates from heart disease and most cancers, lower rates of diabetes and high blood pressure and lower levels of LDL — bad — cholesterol," Sobel added.

In addition to providing children with books that were collected and written for children by Afghan author Idries Shah, the literacy program also includes teacher activity guides, home literacy kits and a parent/teacher DVD.

"We give the training to the teachers using our lesson plans and activity guides," Mallam said. "What we provide our teachers to encourage the training is a DVD that they can show to parents that talks to reading to children and a kit — at least one book to take home. And for many, this is the first book that they own."

In San Francisco, the program will reach out to more than 600 at-risk kids living in homes provided by Mercy Housing, a national nonprofit that provides affordable housing for low-income families. Many of these families live in the City's Tenderloin

and South of Market neighborhoods.

"The best way you help your child succeed in school is to spend time together every day just reading, and to have books available for your children," Mallam said. "That is why we emphasize parental involvement. Our Home Literacy Kits provide at least one book for every child involved in the program."

In addition, local school districts and groups partnering with the Share Literacy program include: Berkeley Unified School District; Berkeley Even Start Program; Alameda County Department of Education; Berkeley-Albany YMCA Early Childhood Services; Albany Children's Center; Albany Unified School District; and St. Joseph the Worker School in Berkeley.

The Bay Area Hoopoe Books Share Literacy Program will include an after-school program for two age groups — 6 to 12 and 13 to 17.

"We could not even start to give 3,700 kids books and develop a curriculum for them to learn from these stories without help from organizations like Kaiser," Mallam said.

"And (we) hope to partner with

many more organizations serving at-risk children in this area."

Hoopoe Books is an imprint of the Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge, an educational nonprofit institution founded in 1969. In 2000, the Institute launched the Hoopoe Share Literacy Program to promote



reading and thinking skills in disadvantaged children by supplying them with books through established literacy partner programs nationwide.

In 2005, the Institute piloted the Hoopoe Early Literacy Curriculum to help teachers improve their instructional skills in literacy and use these books to meet mandated standards for early-education programs. To learn more, visit www.shareliteracy.org.

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