

REAL Men Read Completes First Year

New Milford, PA, April 26, 2018- 17 excited hands shot up in Mrs. Cooley's Kindergarten class when **Real Men Read MENTor**, Bryce Powers asked if students wanted to keep reading over their summer break after reading *First Grade Here I Come* to the class. Students then repeated after Mrs. Cooley, "I promise... I will read to succeed this summer... lots and lots!" United Way of Susquehanna County (UWSC) launched the **Real Men Read** program at Elk Lake Elementary in October 2017 and was held four more times this school year.

Real Men Read connected volunteer male readers, **MENTors** from the community with Kindergarten classes in schools to encourage reading and learning in young children, and boost early grade reading success. **MENTors** made a commitment to read to the class for an hour once a month, were trained to interact and lead the children in discovery, and underwent a security clearance to work with the children. At the end of each reading visit **MENTor Assistants** handed out a copy of the book read to each student to add to their home library and encouraged students to read their books again at home. Each child received the following books:

***Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault**

***Tracks in the Snow* by Wong Herbert Yee**

***Corduroy* by Don Freeman**

***There's a Wocket in my Pocket* by Dr. Seuss**

***First Grade Here I Come* by Nancy Carlson**

Why **MENTors**? With 81% of children under the age of 5 living in economically at-risk situations coupled with an increase in female led single parent households in Susquehanna County UWSC determined that this was a worthwhile program. Typically, teachers are female and so many children do not have a male mentor/positive influencer in their lives promoting the importance of literacy. **Real Men Read** helps these children to see men valuing education and reading.

This is a great opportunity for students to have a positive role model who values education and encourages the love of reading. From K-3rd grade students are learning to read, and from 3rd grade on students need to be able to read to learn. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation students who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers.

We can prepare our kids for a lifetime of success in reading and learning simply by sharing books, encouraging literacy skills, and model the importance of reading.

The program was made possible through community donations and funding from Southwestern Energy.

To learn more about the Real Men Read program or to volunteer as a MENTor or MENTor Assistant please visit: www.UnitedWayofSusquehannaCounty.org.

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Photo attached: MENTor, Bryce Powers and Mrs. Cooley's Kindergarten class.