

Press Release-For Immediate Release

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Real Men Read Completes 2nd Year

New Milford, PA, April 30, 2019- Seventeen excited hands shot up in Mrs. Markarian's kindergarten class when students were asked if they enjoyed having the Real Men Read MENTors come to read to them throughout the year. When asked what their favorite book from the program was, one student exclaimed, "The Gruffalo!"

April marked the end of the 2nd year of the Real Men Read program. The United Way of Susquehanna County (UWSC) launched the Real Men Read program in October 2017. This program has served Elk Lake and Blue Ridge Elementary kindergarten classes during the 2018-19 school year and we are excited to announce that we will be expanding into other local school districts for the 2019-20 school year.

Robin Cobb, UWSC Director of Operations, shared, "Getting students interested in and excited about reading can really have a significant impact. The students are always so excited to see the MENTors when they come to read. We are grateful to have so many generous volunteers from different walks of life willing to give of their time to be a positive role model."

The Real Men Read program connects volunteer *male* readers, MENTors, from the community with kindergarten classes to encourage reading and learning in young children, as well as to boost early grade reading success. MENTors make a commitment to read to a class for an hour once a month. They were trained on the best way to interact with and lead the children in discovery. Each volunteer has undergone a security clearance to work with the children. At the end of each reading visit, MENTor Assistants handed out a copy of that day's book to each student for their home library and encouraged students to reread their books at home. Each child has received the following books:

***Corduroy* by Don Freeman**

***The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson (Blue Ridge Elementary)**

***The Gingerbread Man Loose at the Zoo* by Laura Murray (Elk Lake Elementary)**

***Danny and the Dinosaur* by Syd Hoff**

***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 male 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 modeling the importance of reading.

The program was made possible through community donations and funding from generous donors.

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



Real Men Read MENTor, Jamie Orlandini reading to Mrs. Rezykowski's kindergarten students at Elk Lake Elementary School.

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