

For Immediate Release
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SMART Tip: Give the Gift of Reading

Establishing reading skills essential by third grade for future success

Portland, OR- It won't show up on the "most dangerous toy" list, it doesn't require batteries, it is something that you or even your parents may have enjoyed as a child, and it is something you can do to ensure future success for a special child in your life...give them a book and read with them.

SMART- Start Making A Reader Today, is a non-profit organization that aims to serve 12,000 children in kindergarten through third grade in Oregon during the 2006-07 program year. SMART provides volunteer readers and free books to children in targeted low-income areas. SMART focuses on the critical window of time of kindergarten through third grade because after third grade children will need to read to learn. If a child does not have established reading skills in place by third grade they face a greater danger of falling behind and dropping out of school and not developing the skills for success in life.

Thousands of volunteer readers devote one hour per week to reading to children with the SMART program. From all over the state of Oregon, volunteer readers share fun examples of reading with children:

- "The children have such vivid imaginations that they actually visualize the story, feel like they are part of it. Their enthusiasm is infectious."
-James Kirkham, volunteer reader, Washington Elementary, Pendleton, Oregon
- "One little boy came to the SMART reading session wearing a white cap that he had decorated beautifully with colored markers. He declared that it was his 'reading cap.'"
- Sally Davisson, volunteer reader, Columbus Elementary, McMinnville, Oregon
- "Working with the Department of Youth services, I hear stories from teens in detention. I have no doubt that 'being there' for these younger children will guide a percentage of them in the right direction."
-Lodie Fuller, volunteer reader, Danebo Elementary, Eugene, Oregon
- "Children often get excited to read when the book is about something they already know and like."
-Leslie Rea, volunteer reader, Sabin Elementary, Portland, Oregon

As you think about what to give that special child in your life this holiday season, consider a book, and perhaps the most precious gift of all, your time spent sharing a story. For some book ideas for children in kindergarten through third grade, visit <http://www.getsmartoregon.org/award.html> to find a list of SMART book award winners. The winning books were chosen by children participating in SMART.

About SMART: SMART – Start Making A Reader Today is a non-profit organization dedicated to children’s literacy. SMART provides volunteers who commit one hour a week to read one-on-one with K-3 children for a half hour each. Each child participating in SMART receives free books to keep and read with their families. It’s a simple approach that makes a difference. To learn more about SMART call 503-937-4800, or visit online at www.getsmartoregon.org

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Note for Editors/Reporters: SMART operates in 32 of 36 Oregon counties. If you would like to know more about how SMART impacts your community, contact Stacy Kean at 503-937-4817 or 503-314-5235 to reach local contacts and participants.