

For Immediate Release
March 2, 2024

Teacher-Hosted Book Drive Brings Joy of Reading to Children in Need

Read Across Connecticut collects thousands of books at Blue Back Book Drive

Hundreds of Connecticut children and parents celebrated Dr. Seuss’s birthday today by donating new and gently used books to children in need. The fun-filled family event was organized by the Connecticut Education Foundation (CEF) and community partners iHeartMedia and Blue Back Square. CEF collected several thousand books that will be donated to Little Free Libraries—many of them in Alliance Districts, where some of the greatest needs exist. The book sharing boxes—also a CEF project statewide—are being built by active and retired teachers and students of all ages, including aspiring educators.

“Not every child has books of their own, but our book drive is helping change that,” said CEF President Joslyn DeLancey. “The generous donations we received will allow us to spread the joy of reading by putting free books into the hands of children in disadvantaged communities across the Connecticut.”

The Saturday event included music, giveaways, and games, courtesy of iHeart Communities; face painting and balloon animals, courtesy of Blue Back Square; and a craft table with bookmarks and Swiftie-type bracelets, organized by college students preparing for teaching careers through the Connecticut Education Association’s Aspiring Educators program.

“These fun, creative, interactive experiences help get children engaged and motivated to read,” said DeLancey.

According to data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, the percentage of children who read for fun on their own time is at its lowest point in 40 years, since the question was first asked in 1984. And decades of research confirm the correlation between childhood poverty, lack of access to reading resources, lower reading proficiency, and the struggle to complete high school and prepare for the world beyond.

“We know how important literacy is to student success, so we are doing all we can to promote reading and encourage children to pick up a book and become lifelong readers,” says DeLancey. “We have also enlisted the help of some animal characters to share important messages, including that reading is ‘pawsome’ and ‘a llama’ fun.”

"iHeartMedia has been partnering with CEF for several years to bring the joy of reading to students across the state so they can have books of their own to pick up and read, and let their imaginations soar," said Renee DiNino, on-air personality at The River 105.9 and director of community affairs for iHeartMedia in Connecticut. "We enjoy working with CEF and Blue Back Square and engaging with children to make reading a fun and interactive experience."

"Blue Back Square is proud to partner with the CEF and iHeart Communities on this initiative to collect books for our local schools and gather the community for a fun event," said Elizabeth Zigmont, spokesperson for Blue Back Square.

"We are so grateful to the families who donated books for students in need and especially for our community partners, iHeartRadio and Blue Back Square, who helped turn the book drive into an exciting, not-to-be-missed celebration of reading and Dr. Seuss's birthday," concluded DeLancey.

###

The Connecticut Education Association is Connecticut's largest teachers' union, representing active, retired, and aspiring educators across the state.

The Connecticut Education Foundation is a nonprofit charitable foundation established in 1991 to help children and teachers with extraordinary personal hardships and students planning teaching careers.

For further information, contact Nancy Andrews at 860-725-6317, nancya@cea.org.