



News from the
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Collaboration leads to lending library for Georgia Brown Elementary families

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**Photo Opportunities: Students, parents, preschoolers,
and staff with book bags that can go home. People will
be filling the book bags Feb. 4 at Paso Library Study
Center.**

What is Raising A Reader?

To help kids fall in love with reading. The Raising A Reader mission is a simple one that addresses a national need for effective pre-literacy programs. One in three children entering kindergarten lacks basic pre-reading skills, and almost half of low-income children are read to less than three times a week. As a result, many of these children never develop strong reading skills, a key factor in determining high-school graduation and life-long success.

Raising a Reader is an award-winning early literacy program that provides bright red book bags, filled with high-quality children's books featuring artwork, age-appropriate language, and multicultural themes. And it's having an incredible impact. Head Start children using Raising A Reader tested at least twice as high as the national Head Start average for book knowledge, print knowledge and reading comprehension. Meanwhile, parents in the program showed a 33% increase in the time spent sharing stories with their children, and Spanish-speaking families increased their use of public library services by 56%. The Raising A Reader program is being offered to child care providers and their agencies across the nation. The program is designed to be easy and enjoyable for busy families. Friendly and accessible, Raising A Reader inspires even illiterate or limited English-speaking families to gather around a book with their children and fall in love with reading. For more information, send a message to the Raising A Reader staff at cvpstaff@cvp.pcf.org or call the offices at 650.854.5566.

A Wednesday, February 4 kick off of the Raising A Reader program is planned at the City of Paso Robles Library Study Center at the corner of 32nd and Spring Street from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The new program is one component of San Luis Obispo County's School Readiness Program.

Soon families with red-book bags will be seen in the Georgia Brown Elementary School community because those attending February 4 will be filling them with books. The Raising A Reader bags will be filled with high-quality, age-appropriate books and used as a lending library for young children. Families will be able to take the bags home. Research shows that when reading material is available, families tend to spend more time reading with their children.

Georgia Brown School in Paso Robles is the only school in the county to qualify for the First 5 California's School Readiness Initiative based on its Academic Performance Index. That designation means there are funds available to assist the parents and families of children ages 0-5 in the school's service area.

Money for the School Readiness Initiative comes from First 5 SLO. The program's purpose, through system integration is to improve the ability of families, schools, and communities to prepare children to enter school ready to succeed. To date First 5 SLO has committed \$952,000 to the Georgia Brown School Readiness Program.

Family literacy is a concern in schools with low API scores. Research shows that children from low-income homes often do not come to school ready to read. A \$25,000 grant from San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation will eventually be spent on the early literacy program. So far about \$8,000 was used to bring the Raising A Reader program to Paso Robles. The three components of the program are the book bag, additional books for the 0-5 collection, parenting books, and childcare materials for children whose parents are attending English literacy classes provided by Cuesta College at the Library Study Center.

Early childhood is the most important time in literacy development. Children learn that sentences are broken into words. They learn words represent concepts. They learn the mechanics of reading such as reading left to right and turning pages. It is these skills and more that children need even before coming to school.

A large collaboration has worked to bring the Raising A Reader program to the Georgia Brown community. Those involved were: the Georgia Brown Neighborhood Team, City of Paso Robles Library, San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation, the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education, the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District, Cuesta College, and the First 5 San Luis Obispo County Children and Families Commission.

"As one organization we could not do it, but as a collaborative community partnership, we did it. What was different was this started at the community level," said Angela Hollander, School Readiness Coordinator.