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YPIE's 'YonkersReads!' Program to Deliver 9,000 Books to Elementary Students

By Liz Ehrlich

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The City of Yonkers cares about the education of its kids. This undeniable fact — proven recently, in part, by the advent of the *Yonkers Student Grapevine* — has once again been underscored; this time, by Yonkers Partners in Education (YPIE)'s recent launch of "YonkersReads!," a new citywide literacy program that will put thousands of books into the hands of Yonkers elementary students.

Kindergarteners through third-graders in all 29 Yonkers elementary schools (more than 8,500 students in 292 different classrooms) will have access to a wide range of books intended for reading outside the classroom, as a result of the hard work and imagination of YPIE.

"As we enter into the holiday season, what greater gift to give than the gift of knowledge?" said Mayor Phil Amicone at the "YonkersReads!" launch, held at YPIE headquarters on December 2. "And it all starts with reading."

Students will be given a bag filled with new books each week, as well as bilingual instruction materials for parents and caregivers to bring home, read and return to the classroom.

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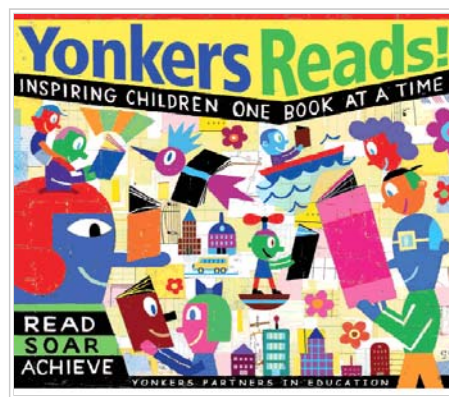
"This has been a labor of love," said YPIE Executive Director Wendy Nadel. "We looked at the pressing needs of the school district, and we found a successful book bag program that was cancelled due to lack of funding, so we thought it would be a great project for YPIE." She said the organization has been packing books for the past two months.

"To give children the ability to read and escape into stories will have a great impact on the rest of their lives," Amicone said. "It doesn't cost a lot, and these book bags will help our students learn."

YPIE has already secured over 9,000 books, and new titles are being delivered each day. Businesses and families throughout Westchester are donating books for the program through the YPIE Web site. The goal is to reach 100,000 newly purchased titles, all of which will be selected by Yonkers Public Schools (YPS) to coincide with the current curriculum.

"By providing books for children to read at home, YPIE is increasing the overall literacy in the Yonkers community and improving its children's chances for future success," Nadel said.

A 2007 National Endowment for the Arts study found that students who read for fun nearly every day perform better on reading tests than those who hardly read at all; the "YonkersReads!" program will help give children this edge. By providing access to new books each week, students will not only have the opportunity to improve their reading skills, but will also learn the pleasures that abound in turning the pages of a new book.



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"This is another wonderful program from YPIE," stated YPS Superintendent Bernard Pierorazio. "Literacy is the foundation of any education, and it's so important to get literature into our students' homes." For more information about YPIE, or to purchase a book for the "YonkersReads!" program, visit www.YPIE.org.

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