

Bellevue Middle literacy program expands with \$14,000 grant

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR-BANNER

Published: Monday, June 2, 2008 at 6:30 a.m.
Last Modified: Monday, June 2, 2008 at 6:04 a.m.



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From left, Cindy Steinemann, of Re/Max Premier Realty, Cindy Schad of Altrusa International Inc., and Dolly Barie, president of the Woman's Auxiliary of Stonecrest, review reading material with students Syllas Asber and Evelyn McMurrer at Bellevue Middle School on Tuesday.

BELLEVUE — Lisa Krysalika, principal at Bellevue Middle School, had visitors in her office Tuesday. And no, they weren't unruly students sent by teachers — they were citizens bearing a gift of \$14,000.

The funds will be used for technical equipment for the school's literacy program, particularly a reading program that ties books to iPods.

The visitors included Cindy Steinemann of Re/Max Premier Realty, Cindy Schad with Altrusa International Inc. and Women's Auxiliary of Stonecrest President Dolly Barie, Secretary Beverly Brammer, Treasurer Catherine Visha and members Rita Gomes and Barbara Runion.

An \$11,000 check they presented to Krysalika represented proceeds of a golf tournament held at the retirement community and organized by the three entities. An anonymous donor contributed another \$3,000 check, bringing the total gift to \$14,000.

"I guess the old adage 'It takes a village to raise a child' is very true, and we are just so happy to be part of your village," said Krysalika.

"Oftentimes, the school system is able to provide the basics, but if we want to go beyond and provide author visits to excite the children about reading, if we want to provide some of the technology that's now part of literacy and reading, it takes more than the basics. So we are just honored that you have become our village, and appreciate that very much," she said.

"The Women's Auxiliary embraced this, the whole idea. They listened to the stats that were given and could not believe them. They put together a golf tournament in three months. We hope this is the beginning of many," Steinemann said.

Schad is in the process of forming an Altrusa Club in south Marion County.

"I am so impressed and excited that we can be forming an Altrusa Club that can extend beyond the borders of Stonecrest and bring other individuals in, that will have the same passion that we have," she said. "We don't want people that want to be involved in a club, we want people that want to make a difference."

Barie said people who helped make the tournament a success included Juanita Burnett, Linda Gargano, Sharon Pierce, Jewel and Tom Kalin, Fred and Erma Blasing, and Donna and Bob Jackson. She also gave special thanks to Steinemann and Schad.

Several students met with the group to learn how the funds will be used to purchase special iPod units that will enhance their reading skills. After a few moments of shyness, the students engaged the philanthropists in discussions about what they would be most interested in reading.

"I think it's really good motivation for kids to read, and to know that if they do something educational they can be rewarded. It's just really nice," student Evelyn McMurrer said.