

Project to Enrich Literacy and Language Development for

Terrace Elementary School Pre-K Students

Nomination for Letha H. Brown Literacy Award

May 31, 2017

Altrusa International, Inc. of Richardson, Texas

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USA

District Nine

2016-2017



LETHA H. BROWN LITERACY AWARD

ENTRY FORM

District: Nine

Name of Club: Altrusa International of Richardson, TX, Inc.

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Date (day, month, year): 5/31/2017

Club Membership (as of entry date): 86

Project Title: Project to Enrich Literacy and Language Development for

Terrace Elementary School Pre-K Students

I. Selection of Project

The Altrusa Richardson Club was privileged to work with Pre-K students at Terrace Elementary, an ethnically and economically diverse school. Helping at this school is ongoing because their staff has been so appreciative of our help. We meet with the administrative leaders in May to determine needs and to plan the best ways for us to support their students. Our activities were with the Pre-K class, as requested. No other community group is meeting this need. In this school, 71% of the student population is economically disadvantaged. Since 32% of the students have limited English proficiency, our program emphasizes the use of oral and written English. Twelve percent of Terrace students receive special education services. Our club had just completed community needs interviews with leaders in the community. One of the major needs they asked us to focus on was literacy.

*Objective 1 - Literacy and language development for Pre-K students

*Objective 2 - To promote recognition of Altrusa

II. Development and Implementation of the Project

The Education Committee voted to do three things. Club members were made aware via announcements and newsletter articles. Members signed up to volunteer.

- **Enrichment Backpacks for Pre-K students**—Altrusans purchased, planned and created 12 different backpacks, each filled with a stimulating activity relating to their curriculum. Each included simple instructions to

to guide parents in working with their children. The backpacks were checked and refilled every two weeks by Altrusans. The teacher selected the students who borrowed the backpacks.

- **Teddy Bear Time**— For seven weeks during the fall of 2016, Altrusans met with a group of 10 Pre-schoolers and their parents for an hour each Wednesday evening. Each child was greeted at the door of the school library by an Altrusan who recorded their attendance, helped them find their nametag and put it on. Another Altrusan helped them find a chair for themselves and their parent. An Altrusan (story reader), had the children and parents sit in a circle around her. She read them a story and showed them the pictures in it. Then she asked if they would like to have a book of their own. No one ever declined. Then the Altrusan read the story again as the children and parents read their own books. The Altrusan was modeling how parents can share a book with a child. Several questions about the book were discussed. Afterwards several other Altrusans did follow-up language or literacy activities. Again, they modeled how a parent can help their child at home. The classroom teacher attended every session and did follow-up activities the following day with the whole class. Every child who attended Teddy Bear Time took a new book home every week in his/her personal tote bag. All students were praised for their attention and hard work during the evening. Joy could be felt throughout the room. Richard Wagner said, “Joy is not in things; it is in us.” The teacher reported that those who attended Teddy Bear Time shared their learning with other friends in the classroom. The program used (with permission) was Leap, PAC Edition by Nell Carvell, published by Brattle Group, LLC.

- **Pre-K Manners Party**— During the spring, Altrusans provided a two-day Manners Extravaganza for the Terrace Pre-K classes. The objectives were to model and encourage the use of words like, “please”, “thank you”, and “you are welcome” appropriately in oral language. On day one, each student chose a book to give to a friend in the class. Then an Altrusan helped them gift-wrap the book and place a beautiful bow on it. After the students were dismissed Altrusans stayed and decorated the room for the party on the following day. The second day was the time for a gift exchange and the practice of many words like “please”, “thank-you”, and “you are welcome”.

Altrusans served ice cream with a variety of toppings as well as juice and fruit snacks. Lots of phrases like, “May I please have sprinkles?” and “Thank you for the ice cream!” were heard time and time again. Every student left with a new book and a smile on their face. Altrusans did too! One child asked, “May we have another Manners Party tomorrow?”

The Education Committee was allocated money from our fundraiser to pay for all parts of the Pre-K project explained above. Including planning, preparation and execution, 188 hours were volunteered, involving 37% of our members. The impact on the community will be a group of children who became much more literate early in their lives, setting them up for future success.

III. Evaluation of the Project

The idea of supporting literacy and language development at Terrace was achieved. Since our activities involved Pre-K students, we were able to observe the way they started to work more independently as they read books or followed directions. We heard their conversations as they talked with each other or with their parents or with their teacher. Some, who didn't have much to say at the beginning, began to ask questions or share stories about something they had done. Their teacher began to share her ideas with us and has asked us to return and "Do it Again". The total number of Pre-K students was 38. All parents in the community who attended Teddy Bear Time expressed appreciation which was shown by their words and the expressions on their faces. Whether they spoke our language or not, we could see and feel their appreciation. It has been like Mother Teresa said, "It is not what we do, it is how much love we put in the doing." One RISD administrator, who observed a Manners Party, expressed her appreciation and said she had no idea Altrusa did such wonderful things with RISD's students.

The objective of promoting recognition of Altrusa was achieved. During their 2017 well-attended Evening of Honors Garden Gala, the RISD Board of Trustees presented Altrusa with the "2017 Spirit of RISD Award". It was with honor and great love that we accepted it.

Synopsis of Project: The Richardson Altrusa Club developed Literacy and Language Enrichment activities for Pre-K students. Enrichment backpacks were used at home.

The Teddy Bear Time evening program taught parents how to work with their children. The Manners Extravaganza taught children to give to others and use manners. Improved class participation and developing oral language skills were noted by the teacher.

Submitted by: _____

Nancy R. Rohm, 2016-2017 President

Supplemental Photos Letha H. Brown Award Submission



Gerry Carron reading to children at Teddy Bear Time



Gerry Carron ready to serve ice cream at the Manners Party



Nancy Rohm helping a student wrap his gift for the Manners Party



Elizabeth DuBose ready to serve treats at the Manners Party.



Coralee Miller and Janet McColloch helping students choose a book to give to their friend at the Manners Party.



Betty Mastick serving refreshments at the Manners Party



Linda McCollum and Betsy Meggs prepare for Teddy Bear Time



Terrace Elementary School with our Altrusa Banner on the front of the building