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# Literacy project rounds up books for children

By Jeannie P. Smith



Tom Houk reads "Little Black, A Pony" to first graders at Hunsberger Elementary School as part of the Black Stallion Literacy Project.

**T**he Black Stallion Literacy Project, which emphasizes reading, rodeo and responsibility, is growing at a galloping pace.

“We added three more schools and presented 3,720 books to 1,860 first graders at 25 schools this year,” said Teresa Lindsey, who chairs the literacy committee. “Reno Rodeo is still the only rodeo in the country that supports this national program.”

Lindsey and her husband, Jim, along with other volunteers, have developed a fine-tuned presentation for the children at each school.

“We talk about the importance of reading and the excitement of the rodeo coming to town,” Lindsey said. “BLM personnel also introduce Smokey Bear and discuss their responsibility to fire safety. It’s a fun day for the kids.”

The children then get a chance to pet the horses brought along and meet Smokey Bear. At the end of the program, they receive two picture books by “Black Stallion” author Walter Farley.

“It’s one of the most powerful programs for young students in Washoe County,” said Marie Baxter, director of the Reno Rodeo Foundation. “They get to talk with the cowboys and see the horses and then take away two books of their very own. I don’t think there’s any other literacy outreach program that has a more lasting impact.”



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