Sac State professor launches citywide book drive to boost children’s literacy

Professor Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin has operated a one-woman bookmobile out of her personal vehicle and home garage for the past four years, gathering up some 24,000 used children’s books and delivering them to local schools and social service agencies.

“Sometimes people will ask me for books, or I’ll hear of a need for books. Up to now, there hasn’t been anything organized. It's just been me, my husband, Mike McKibbin, our son, Mark, and my wonderful students,” says Roseberry-McKibbin, a speech pathology professor. (She has been known to add two points to students’ test scores when they bring in at least two children’s books on exam day.)

Now the professor is taking her book appeal public for the first time, asking the community to donate gently used books suitable for readers up to age 18.

Collection boxes labeled “Love-Talk-Read” have been placed at 11 area schools and in locations operated by Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services and Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency. An additional collection box is located in Sac State’s Shasta Hall, home of the Department of Speech Pathology & Audiology. For a complete list of donation sites, go to sacbookdrive.blogspot.com.

Roseberry-McKibbin’s passion for book-giving started in 2008, when she helped one of her students collect 500 books for special-needs children as a part of a master’s project.

“I wanted to give books to the children so that their parents could read to them, to increase their literacy skills,” Roseberry-McKibbin says. “I want to give children books to take home. I learned that most middle-class children have 13 or more books at home, but in low-income neighborhoods, there is one book per 300 children. So imagine yourself holding up Good Night, Moon, and see a line of 300 kids. That hit me really hard.”

She also learned of a strong correlation between illiteracy and criminal activity and that three of four low-income fourth graders will never catch up if they weren’t reading on grade level by the end of third grade.
“I would rather prevent problems by intervening early than to see these kids grow up and go to jail,” she says. “As a professor and a mom, I wondered what I could do to make a difference. So I began collecting books.”

After her mother, Bev, died in April 2009, Roseberry-McKibbin launched the McKibbin family’s book drive in her honor. Her students and church friends have contributed to their efforts, helping to put approximately 24,000 books into the hands of children.

She adopted the slogan Love-Talk-Read to illustrate for parents the three simple concepts for relating to their children.

“Our society has become so polarized with more people who lack adequate literacy skills and the rest of us who are blessed to be where we are,” Roseberry-McKibbin says. “So the goal is to level the playing field and bring social justice, so that low-income kids have a better chance of a good life.”

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at (916) 278-6156. To reach Professor Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin by email: sacbookdrive@gmail.com.

– Dixie Reid
dixie.reid@csus.edu

Sacramento State is making a difference in California’s Capital Region and beyond. We offer a life-changing opportunity for our 28,000 students, preparing them to be leaders in their professions and communities. Our professors are known for their dedication to great teaching. And our location in the capital of the nation’s most populous state allows students to pursue unique internships and research.

###

9-S13-DR