Volunteers share love of reading with kids at children’s home_120604

December 3, 2004
Posted: 12/03/04

Teachers from the Delta Kappa Gamma Society read to twin brothers during the Bountiful Book Party held on the Texas Baptist Children's Home campus. Members of the society brought three books each to share with the home's single parent ministry. Susan Lee (right), supervisor for Texas Baptist Children's Home's Family Care program, talks to one toddler about the books provided by the Delta Kappa Gamma Society of teachers during the Bountiful Book Party.

Volunteers share love of reading with kids at children's home

By Miranda Bradley

Texas Baptist Children's Home

Fifty teachers recently opened a new classroom in Round Rock on the Texas Baptist Children's Home campus. But instead of blackboards and erasers, the two cottages, which normally house up to 10 Family Care residents, were filled with books and children. And the one lesson these volunteers wanted to teach was a love for reading.

Members of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society brought three books each to share with the children of Texas Baptist Children's Home's Family Care Program during its annual Bountiful Book Party.

While Texas Baptist Children's Home began in 1950, Family Care was started in the 1970s as an answer to the growing number of single mothers with children.

Deborah Taylor, principal of Wells Branch Elementary School, reads to a child in Texas Baptist Children's Home's Family Care program during the Delta Kappa Gamma Society's annual Bountiful Book Party. Members of the society brought three books each to share with the home's single parent ministry.

Six of the children's home's 13 cottages serve these families, which often

are struggling with how to thrive in the world around them. Some mothers come from abusive home environments, while others are suffering from financial strain. But no matter their circumstance or background, each is grappling with the same issue–how to be a better parent.

Delta Kappa Gamma volunteers showed mothers how to do that by learning how to read to their kids. Aside from promoting a love of reading, it also helps forge a strong relationship between parent and child, members said.

“We just show them how to ask questions about the book and help the children understand it a little better,” said Laura Bridge, president of the society. “The mothers always get more out of it than even the children.”

Delta Kappa Gamma is made up of both retired and active teachers in the area as far away as Leander and Georgetown. The group helps raise money for scholarships and chooses various projects throughout the year to give back to the local community.

“This is our favorite project out of all the ones we do,” Bridge said. “Everyone looks so forward to it every year.”

Despite all the things Delta Kappa Gamma is, there is one thing it isn't.

“We aren't a sorority,” explained Betty Parnell, a retired Houston-area teacher. “It's an international society made up of key women educators. And we love to do this type of work.”

Reading provides a dual purpose for the moms, said Susan Lee, Family Care Program administrator.

“It's a really good excuse to hold your baby in your lap,” she said. “It is an opportunity for bonding and education at the same time.”

The society has been offering this bonding experience to TBCH residents for more than six years and plans to do it well into the future.

“We are teachers, so this fits perfectly with what we are about,” Bridge said. “We are able to promote a love of books to kids who might not have as many opportunities as other children. There's just a great deal of personal satisfaction in that.”

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