

Education



Members with the St. James Service Club gave away free books to third graders at Southport Elementary School Dec. 20.

St James Service Club donate books to third graders

Stories and photos by Eliot Duke
Staff Writer

The first ever St. James Service Club book drive turned into overwhelming success with area third graders coming out as the biggest winners.

Several members of the club spent part of their morning Dec. 20 at Southport Elementary School passing out more than 100 wrapped books to 64 third graders on the last day before holiday break. SJSC's inaugural book drive surpassed all expectations and laid the foundation for what the group hopes is an annual tradition that continues to grow.

"It's much larger than we expected," said Paula Munger, SJSC service programs chair. "It seemed to hit the right but-

ton for people and they were so excited."

SJSC collected more than 500 books in all and were able to hold similar events at Supply Elementary School, Virginia Williamson Elementary and Bolivia Elementary. Munger said the group selected third grade specifically because it's the age group where children start "reading to learn" instead of just learning to read.

"We thought this was a pivotal grade," Munger said. "It's an important grade for reading and we wanted to be able to help the children in Brunswick County."

Every SES third grader received two books and they were able to hold a unwrapping celebration in the cafeteria.

"I think it's wonderful," said SES Principal Peg Bourne. "We're very grateful and the students are so excited. We're

very blessed with our community support in Southport and beyond in Brunswick County."

Munger and Jeff Mounts compiled a book list for Amazon where anyone could make a purchase and donate it to the drive. A former elementary school teacher donated nearly two dozens books, telling Munger she knew how important it was for the children.

"Third grade is a very good age to have community members interact with the students," Stephanie Webster, an SES parent facilitator, said. "I think that promoting literacy is very important, especially in our community. The selection of books is fantastic."

Munger wants to collect even more books next year so SJSC can visit additional schools.