

Lasting Impact on Community: Dictionary and Literacy Project Rotary Club of Laguna Beach

Phase 1 (Dictionary Distribution):

For several years, Rotary Club of Laguna Beach has distributed Dictionaries to every third grader in attendance at a Laguna Beach-area school. The Club purchases the dictionaries by making a grant to the Dictionary Project. The Dictionary Project is a non-profit organization that provides personal dictionaries for third grade students. The Dictionary Project in turn mails enough dictionaries to Rotary Club of Laguna Beach so that our club can distribute one dictionary to each third grader.

The dictionaries are delivered to the care of our Interact Club Members. The Interact Club Members personally label each dictionary with a Rotary Club of Laguna Beach sticker, and package the dictionaries for delivery to each Third Grade classroom.

Rotarians then organize distribution dates with each third grade classroom. All dictionaries are directly distributed to each third grader from a Rotarian. El Morro Elementary and Top of the World Elementary will each hold special distribution “assemblies” attended by all third graders.

Each student is told about our Rotary Club, and each student is asked to use the dictionary to assist the student with his or her homework, research, spelling, and reading comprehension. The students are always thrilled to receive their very own dictionary that they can write their own names in! They are also thrilled to know they can take the dictionaries home and bring them to their future classrooms. In the past, some students mention have told our club that they had been waiting for the Dictionary Day to come since the student saw his or her older sister come home with *their* very own dictionary from our club. Dictionary Distribution days are attended by at least 8 Rotarians/distribution, and we had over 6 distribution days.

The Dictionaries have a lasting impact on the third graders. Members of our club are approached from students who received their dictionaries over 10 years ago, and our members have been told how those students were to receive their dictionaries when they were in third grade.

Importantly, each student gets to keep his or her dictionary as he or she continues through elementary school. The student is able to use the dictionary to enhance his or her research, improve spelling, and to assist with reading comprehension.

Phase 2 (The Spot homework club):

This year, in lieu of distributing iPads to the Laguna Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), our committee reached out to the LBUSD to identify pressing needs in the District for the upcoming school year.

Importantly, the LBUSD identified a need for high school students to have a safe and inviting place to hang out and study after school, which is supervised by adults and, hopefully, teachers. High school students generally don't attend the Boys & Girls Club after school because they feel that it's for “little kids.” Our club was excited to hear about a new program launched in Spring 2016 at the high school, called “The Spot,” which was created by LBUSD and the Boys & Girls Club of Laguna Beach as a fun place for older kids to hang out after school. Our club wanted to get involved to ensure that The Spot could continue into the 2017 school year.

LBUSD partnered with the Boys & Girls Club to staff the school program, however, the program is still in need of school supplies and technology to ensure that when the students attend the program, they're able to access the Internet and have the supplies necessary to get their homework done. We decided that by providing The Spot with school supplies and food, we would guarantee The Spot's success and help grow its attendance.

Additionally, throughout the 21 weeks that our club is sponsoring the program with supplies and food, our club will work with the leaders at The Spot to host various “study competitions,” where the most dedicated

students will be rewarded with special school supplies, food, etc. We're confident that with support from our club, The Spot will turn into a thriving after school club, where students will have a safe place to study.

The impact on the community will be immense. By providing older students with somewhere to hang out after school, which is supervised by adults, students who usually spend their afternoons unsupervised will now be required to dedicate a few hours after school to studying and meeting with tutors and fellow students. We know that this shift in focus for the older students will improve grades, reduce the likelihood of kids getting into trouble after school, and will provide peace of mind to parents, who know that their kids are being supervised and tutored in a safe and fun environment.