

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

Part 1: Dictionaries for 3rd Graders

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 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.

Part 2: Library Books and Reading for Elementary Schools

Building on the success of the Dictionary project, this year we worked with the LBUSD to design and implement a program to donate K-3 age-appropriate books to the school libraries at El Moro and Top of the World elementary schools.

We will purchase four new reading books per month and donate two copies of each to the two school libraries. The donations will be made by the Rotary Club in the name of our weekly speaker(s). Each book will be signed by the speaker(s), and will have a Rotary Club of Laguna Beach sticker on the flyleaf. The books will be selected based on recommendations from the librarians and teachers at the schools.

The exciting part for our Rotarians is that a club member or members will go to the schools to read from the new books to the students. The schedule of readings will be determined by the school officials.

The lasting impact of this project, besides the obvious one of providing additional quality books to the libraries, will be the positive impression made on the students, by someone other than their teachers and parents, of the value and fun of books and reading. Not to be overlooked is the reward to participating Rotarians of interacting with the students.

Part 3: Laptops for Boys and Girls Club

Last year, 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. So we provided school supplies and food to The Spot.

This year we wanted to help ensure that The Spot continues its success and also becomes even more of a place for study and homework, as opposed to just a place to hang out. The Boys and Girls club and the LBUSD identified the lack of computers for students to use as an impediment. Assignments are received and submitted via the internet, and many of the students who use The Spot don't have their own laptop. So we have agreed to purchase and donate 4 laptops to be used at The Spot, under the supervision of LBUSD and Boys and Girls Club personnel. In addition we will again provide school supplies for The Spot.

The impact on the community will be immense. With the provision for older students of 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.