

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

Part 1: Dictionaries for 3rd Graders

For 18 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 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 have 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 15 years ago, and our members have been told how thrilled 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, last 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 propose to continue this project in 2019-2020, and expand it to include the three private elementary schools in Laguna Beach.

The books will be selected based on recommendations from the librarians and teachers at the schools, and the purchases will be made by the school librarians, with invoices sent to the Club Treasurer for payment. Each book will have a Rotary Club of Laguna Beach sticker on the flyleaf.

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. Both the students and the Rotarians have especially enjoyed this part of the project.

The lasting impact of this project, besides the obvious one of providing additional quality books to the libraries, is 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.