UWO students participate in Imagination Library to promote literacy

by Danielle Beyer - Thursday, May 10, 2012

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Children ages birth to 5 years old and their parents joined students from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh at the Oshkosh Public Library on Saturday, May 5 for a literacy event sponsored by the Oshkosh Area United Way.

The event was part of an ongoing project intended to collect research about the impact of reading with children starting at an early age. Children participating in the program, which is part of the Imagination Library project, are given a book once a month, and parents are encouraged to then read the book as a family.

“We want parents to sit down with their children and talk about what the story is about and then record their child's reaction to bringing the book into the home,” said Michelina Manzi, professor of reading education at UW Oshkosh.

Twice a year the United Way holds literacy events at the Oshkosh Public Library for Imagination Library participants to test the children's progress and create even more excitement about reading. This past week's event gave children the opportunity to read along with athletes from the UW Oshkosh Athletic Department.

About 50 student volunteers from UW Oshkosh participated in the event, including members of the College of Education and Human Services who assisted in conducting the research.

Anna Beckerleg, a freshman nursing major at UW Oshkosh, read *Froggy Plays Soccer* with a few of the participating children.

“I thought this would be a good idea because I'm on the soccer team, and I remember reading this book when I was a kid,” Beckerleg said. “It's challenging, but it's still fun and it really helps the kids learn new words.”

Ethan Steinhoff, a sophomore business marketing major who plays football for the Titans, said he thinks promoting literacy in young children is especially important as technology becomes more prevalent in their daily routines.

“I think these kinds of events are good because children will see the importance of reading versus just being on the computer all day,” Steinhoff said.

The UW Oshkosh mascot, Clash, was also in attendance at the event**.** While many of the younger children were apprehensive about approaching Clash the Titan, Elizabeth Alderton, professor of reading education at UW Oshkosh, said she still considered the event to be a great success overall.

“Anytime you can get a library full like this is just outstanding,” she said. “That is really our goal, and we're very excited about what the response has been like.”

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