

Book Ark Launched at City School to Encourage Reading

It was a festive afternoon Oct. 7 at the Bradley Elementary School in Asbury Park as the entire school filed out onto the soccer field for the launch of a new book ark, organized by the Kiwanis Club of Asbury Park.

Principal Thea Jackson-Byers contributed to the jubilation opening the ceremony saying "Readers are leaders," to cheers from the students and their teachers.

"We are planting the seeds and you will take over and make it grow," she said.

Music provided by a DJ set the tone for the program as students lined up to march onto the field under a bright blue sky. The book ark was constructed by Kiwanis member Steve Everk who painted it white and last year brought it to the school where students decorated it with bright colored pictures. For the unveiling it was hidden by a gray tarp.

After comments by Jackson-Byers, Kiwanis member and teacher Danielle Sammut, a current Miss New Jersey, and Kiwanis member Sarah Bloom spoke to students about the importance of reading and the part it played in their own lives. Bloom walked through the crowd asking children about the last book they read receiving several



The Kiwanis Club of Asbury Park organized the installation of a book ark at the Bradley Elementary School in Asbury Park.

enthusiastic responses.

When the time for the unveiling arrived Bradley Elementary School's Student Council worked together to remove the tarp and show the finished product to the student body.

Abby Daly, founder of the Bridge of Books Foundation, attended the event with 13 cardboard cases carrying 1000 books for the launch. Daly started the

foundation 20 years ago and jokingly calls it "her full time volunteer job."

A former attorney, she represented children's cases in court.

Jackson-Byers then asked the group "who likes to read" as hands throughout the crowd shot up into the air.

"We take reading seriously here at Bradley Elementary School," the principal said.

"When I tell Bradley Elementary School rocks, it rocks."

Amy DePaul, the school's media specialist, was excited for the launch and said, "Readers are part of the team, and of being leaders. The more you read the more knowledge you have."

DePaul said she recently ran the annual book fair at the school and said it was the most successful one she's seen in the nine

years she has taught at Bradley Elementary. "We were flooded," she said. "Many books were sold."

The book ark will be located in the front of the school on Third Avenue where it will hold books for young readers in Pre-K to Fifth grades. Children are welcome to take the books home to add to their personal collection or read them and bring them back for others to read.

The book ark will be an ongoing program so donations of gently used or new books will be appreciated going forward.

Following the event Daly, said "We are absolutely delighted to be partnering with the Asbury Kiwanis to install a book-filled ark outside of Bradley Elementary. It's an opportunity for Bradley Elementary students and the surrounding community to browse and choose books to take home and enjoy and keep or return - the same books or others that are ready to be shared with others! With ongoing support from Asbury Kiwanis, this ark is an opportunity for kids and adults to take ownership in creating access to books for themselves and each other."

For more information log onto <https://bridgeofbooksfoundation.org>.