

THE AEGIS

Success by reading is beyond doubt [Editorial]

By Editorial form The Aegis
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Summer is a good time to boost reading.

The Harford County Public Library very successfully uses the break from the end of one school year to the beginning of the next to energize people, especially young people, about reading.

This summer, "Build a Better World" is the theme of the library's Summer Reading Challenge that aims to get participants to read an aggregate 130,000 books. It's a lofty goal, but one that the library system puts simply on its web site: "If everyone reads one more book than last year, we'll reach the goal."

As of Monday, the library system said that 44,485 of the targeted 130,000 books had been read. That's about 34 percent of the goal, with 40 days left in the program that started June 19 and ends Sept. 2.

But as wonderful as the Harford County Public Library System's ongoing summer reading program is, it didn't prompt this editorial. Another Harford County reading program did.

The Greater Excellence in Education Foundation, which recently changed its name to the Harford County Education Foundation, has its Books In Hand Summer Learning Program that gives libraries to some of the county's youngest and most in need people.



As detailed on the front of Friday's pp&t section, some Edgewood Middle School sixth-graders volunteered to help package nearly 4,000 books the foundation was sending home for the summer — and forever — with about 1,200 elementary school students.

Those students are all the children in kindergarten through the second grade in all of the Title I elementary schools in the county.

The foundation gave the neediest kids books to take home in an effort to neutralize what educators call "the summer slide," where children don't retain until the start of the next school year what they learned the previous year.

Reading, a learned behavior, is arguably the greatest life skill.

While illiteracy rates may have declined, there are still way too many people who either can't read or can't read well.

The foundation not only has a great understanding of one of the biggest hurdles to students learning to read, which will enable them to succeed, but also has a terrific way of attacking the problem.

"GEEF's commitment for starting at-home libraries for kids is grounded in research that demonstrates access to public libraries is simply not enough, and that the number of books in the home is a greater indicator of future success than the income or education levels of the parents," Warren Hamilton, chairman of the foundation's board, said.

To that end, the foundation has given more than 10,000 books to kids since starting the program six years ago. This year, students got a backpack filled with books and stuff to create at-home libraries.

By giving them books every summer, the Harford County Education Foundations opens the door to successful lives for our needy, young kids. There can be no better gift.

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