

School

Bring a Book big success at Laurel Oak

By Cheryl Rondeau

Bringing great books to great kids is the mission for the Laurel Oak Elementary PTA.

"This is all about the kids and their library," says Karen Clawson, Friends of the Library Chairperson at LOE. "We have a great library, we're just trying to make it better."

On Oct. 12, the PTA committee held its Third Annual "Bring a Book, Bring a Friend Fun-raiser." Nearly 100 parents, friends, and neighbors arrived with hardcover children's books in hand to support the school's mission.

Laurel Oak currently has the largest elementary school population in Collier County and the library serves about 750 students each day. Clawson says this event is a way to "jump start the students minds and imaginations."

"It's also a way to stock the shelves with the best books available," she added.

Clawson hopes the idea will catch on at every school in Collier County. This year's Fun-raiser was held at the home of PTA President Bonnie Winfield. Admission for the luncheon was a book and a friend and nearly \$8,000 in books and funding were donated.

"The house was so full, we could hardly walk through it," said Winfield. "The dining room table was piled high with the books people brought."

Uniting local communities was another goal of the PTA.

"Getting to know the devel-



Over \$6,000 in books were received during this year's Fun-raiser.



From left, seated: Lori Myers, media specialist; Sheila Herbert-Collins, author; Dr. Karen Baha, learning specialist, and Anna D'Amico, guest. Back: Christopher Marker, Dean; Mindy DiPietro, PTA; Karen Clawson, event chair; Bonnie Winfield, PTA president; Janet Custer, PTA.

oper of your neighborhood, your banker, or your hairdresser can often transform awkward handshakes into viable friendships," states Clawson, noting that the event embraces two of life's best offerings, books and friends.

The idea started two years ago when Clawson, Winfield, and another school volunteer wanted to bring "fresh" books to the library, along with creating some ownership between the community and the school.

For each book collected, students will hand inscribe a special bookplate featuring the name of the donor.

The event also featured guest author Sheila Herbert-Collins, Media Specialist at Manatee Elementary, and author of seven children's books. Herbert-Collins spoke of her Cajun culture as the inspiration for her unique "Cajun Fairy Tales."

Born in Abbeville, Louisiana, the heart of Cajun Country, Herbert-Collins' stories always include a Cajun recipe. A few of her titles include Jolie Blonde and the Three Heberts (a Cajun Goldilocks tale) and Jacques et la Canne a Sacre, (a Cajun Jack and the Beanstalk).

"I was honored to attend," she said of the event. "To see this big

table absolutely filled with books for the kids was amazing. What a wonderful thing to do."

She said her Cajun juices are currently churning up her next children's book.

"I got this picture in my mind - a Cajun gator coming to Florida to meet his Hispanic cousin," she said.

Because her publishing company was based in New Orleans, she has no idea when her next manuscripts will be published. Twenty percent of the sales of her books will be donated to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort. They are available at Barnes and Noble Booksellers in Naples and Ft. Myers.

PTA Vice President of Membership Mindy DiPietro said the goal of the event is to get people involved in their schools and community.

"If we get people to put it out there, we can build relationships with the parents," she says, adding that parents should ask their child's teacher how they can help, whether in the classroom, school, or at home.

"I love this event because it offers the kids immediate satisfaction," DiPietro stated.

The PTA also holds "coffee house" meetings every other month, during the day while the kids are at school. The group also publishes a newsletter and website to keep parents and teachers informed.

'Miracles' are ta place every day

The Write Stuff

By Joe Landon, Collier Public Schools

The Collier County Public School District celebrated a "miracle," Oct. 20, at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Administrative Center.

The gathering recognized the successes of the MIRACLE after school programs and celebrate National Lights on After School Day.

Speakers included Collier County School Superintendent Baker, representatives of the Boys & Girls Club of Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board, partment of Education visiting from Tallahassee, a lino, principal of Lake Park Elementary School.

Students who participate in the program were a answer questions about the program.

In Collier County there are three MIRACLE aft grams - MIRACLE 1, 2 and 3. Combined, these pro

The programs add 15 hours of academic instruction and youth development to the lives of these students each week.

Academic 'miracles' take place every day, after s County schools including Golden Gate Middle and Intermediate schools. The programs run the entire are add 15 hours of academic instruction and youth the lives of the participating students each week.

The MIRACLE program targets at-risk students. grants were awarded to Collier County, expanding t 1,650 students. They are provided with tutoring, coo hours, reading support, homework assistance, Engi many other enrichment opportunities.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Collier County are pr after school programs across the country in standi celebrating our MIRACLE after school programs ar

In the Spotlight..



Featuring
Principal
Dennis Snider
Corkscrew
Middle School



Dennis Snider is a 27-year educator and former milit has been with the Collier County District for 11 years. principal at Golden Gate Middle School prior to open screw Middle in 2000. When not at school, he enjoys a Snider's wife Dana is a program specialist at Everglades They have three daughters, two sons and three grandc favorite thing about CMS is the school's hardworking: really care about the kids," he says.