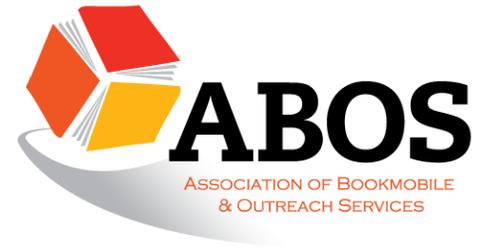


Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services

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Press Release – For Immediate Release

The Norfolk (VA) Public Library is the recipient of the 2021 ABOS Preschool Outreach and School Services Inspirations Award. The Preschool Outreach and School Services Inspirations Award, sponsored by the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services, is presented annually to a library, department, or an individual who has provided exemplary library outreach services to children and students in their community, from age infant to college.

Out-of-the-box thinking has been required for library systems across the country to maintain engagement with their patrons, and Norfolk Public Library (NPL) took an innovative approach to the nationally acclaimed Read 1000 Books Before Kindergarten early literacy program.

Partnering with 32 Norfolk Public Schools' elementary schools, the NPL launched the Read 500 Books Before Kindergarten Project for the 2020-2021 school year. Pre-Kindergarten teachers were incentivized to sign their classes up to receive prizes and goodies for themselves and their students, including two books for each student's home library, all while logging the books read for their classrooms and racing towards the goal of 500 books read by the end of the school year. To date, over 114,000 book titles have been read to students. Teachers have registered their classes as a group in the Beanstack website, and update the books read weekly. Teachers have found using this website to be convenient, accessible, and a helpful tool to track their class's progress throughout the school year.

When the NPL moved to virtual programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the NPL's online content included story times that Pre-Kindergarten teachers could utilize to supplement their progress in the Read 500 Books Before Kindergarten Project. While quality virtual programming was a must, NPL wanted to encourage teacher participation by having all aspects of the project be easy to understand and integrate in classroom curriculums. Teachers conducting classes virtually have been able to show NPL's story time videos to their students as desired, thus adding another book to their goal of 500 books read as well as promoting the NPL's general virtual content throughout the community. Although the NPL cannot personally visit classrooms again just yet, the NPL has still been able to make a difference in the lives of Pre-Kindergarten students. This project helps them develop their early literacy skills, increase

their love of reading, and encourage a desire for knowledge that will not only aid them academically, but personally, and professionally as well.

Tori Lannetti, Community Engagement Coordinator for the Norfolk Public Library, shares that, “Read 500 Books Before Kindergarten takes an established program and, via partnership with local schools, maximizes the number of children served in a single setting. The impact this project has on the development of early literacy skills among Norfolk’s Pre-K students, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is an achievement in itself.”

Tracie Kunkel, Preschool Coordinator for the Norfolk Public Schools, highlights that, “Norfolk Public Library has always been a crucial link between families and the school system, particularly for young children not yet in school and for those just starting school. Their innovative ways in programming and boosting early literacy reflects their drive to uphold their mission regardless of the impediments that may come their way.”

The Preschool Outreach and School Services Inspirations Award will be presented at the Awards Ceremony to be held on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, during the 2021 Virtual Conference of the Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services. The ceremony starts at 10:15 a.m. CST.