

Reading Activities Help Bring Kids, Families And Communities Together

(NAPSA)—To turn a new page in promoting literacy and a sense of community, communities around the country are creating shared reading activities.

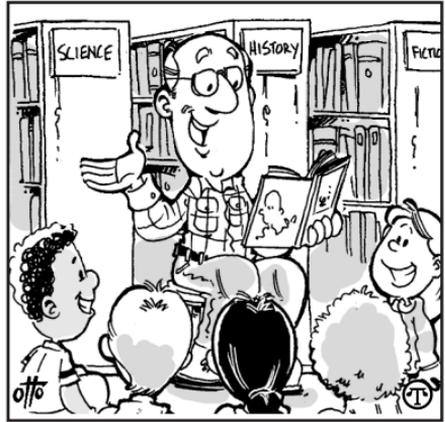
From reading challenges organized by Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) programs to cities reading the same book, many are finding that reading can foster closer communities.

“Reading and sharing stories together not only promotes literacy but is also a wonderful way to build stronger community ties,” said Carol H. Rasco, RIF president and CEO. “Through activities like the Community Reading Challenge, we can bring together readers of all ages to encourage a life-long love of reading and learning.”

Read With Me: The RIF Community Reading Challenge, presented by MetLife Foundation, is one way communities are coming together. The challenge, which takes place each year in more than 1,000 sites across the country, brings community members, civic leaders, business people, and others into the schools as reading role models and also encourages children to seek reading experiences outside of school.

At Longfellow Elementary School in Rock Island, Ill., for example, the community kicked off their 2004 challenge with a proclamation from the Mayor. Then students took the challenge to the community, setting up a booth in the mall and inviting passersby to read to students. The children also visited a local adult center and invited seniors to read aloud and share in activities.

“Shared reading programs like the Community Reading Challenge provide volunteer opportu-



Sharing stories helps promote literacy and helps build stronger communities.

nities, foster a love of reading in children, and strengthen community connections,” said Sibyl Jacobson, MetLife Foundation president and CEO. “MetLife Foundation is proud to partner with RIF in building a corps of community volunteers who are helping to inspire a new generation of readers.”

Other communities share common experiences by reading and talking about the same book. The “One Book” program, where community leadership selects a book and invites residents to read and discuss it collectively, has gained popularity since Seattle launched the first event in 1998. Today cities from New York to Los Angeles are adopting the trend.

Whatever the method or location—municipal Web sites, community centers, schools, libraries or even places of worship—any community can rally together to share ideas about improving literacy.

To learn more about promoting literacy, the Community Reading Challenge or to volunteer at a RIF site, visit www.rif.org.