

A Reading Rocket: DeLong Students Shoot for the Moon

"We're taking off here—our kids have never been more excited about reading," exclaimed former Principal Keith Totten. Children stop him in the halls to describe books they're reading. At times it is difficult for teachers to get students outside at recess—some prefer the library to the playground. Parents discover their children "sneaking a read" with flashlight and book under the blankets at night. If that were not enough to qualify DeLong as a school of eager readers, Washington's past governor and the state's largest university have offered their commendations.

Indeed, the achievements of this Tacoma school are noteworthy. In September, the University of Washington designated DeLong as "Outstanding Puget Sound School" for 2004. Governor Gary Locke recognized DeLong as "Reading School of the Month" in December. Starting in 2000, reading accomplishments began to soar, reflected in vastly improved reading test scores. DeLong's achievements are especially impressive



"Rocketeers" Reflect

Reading has helped me with all subjects. It helps me understand the directions. ~Silver

Reading used to be hard. Now I can read a book just like that. It gives me things I need to know. ~Danika

Reading can make pictures in my head. With reading, I can do stuff I can't do in real life. ~Mike

Reading helped me by making me smart. It pumps my brain. ~Charles

because slightly more than half of the students qualify for free or reduced-price meals and English is not the native language of many students. The ethnic mix of the student population is both challenging and enriching for teachers.

Principal Ed Schau praises Page Ahead as an outstanding educational partner: "Books from Page Ahead have played a significant role in DeLong's skyrocketing reading scores during the past four years." During that time, DeLong students received more than 6,000 free books from Page Ahead. Book distribution activities have included parent and student read-ins, art projects, literature celebrations, and an upcoming "run for reading." Reading instructor Lynda Damrill stated, "Page Ahead has had a measurable impact on DeLong. We hope the partnership continues for years to come."

The students at DeLong demonstrate their commitment to literacy by consistently meeting their ambitious Accelerated Reader goals. One fourth grader said, "Reading has helped me become a better learner. Now I can double check my work, read my handwriting, and spell better than ever." To ensure a "student friendly" selection of books that would meet the interests unique to DeLong, this year a group of students helped select the types of books to be distributed throughout the year.

Teacher Linda Ikeda enjoys watching the excitement in the classroom as her students look over the books and make their choices. She expressed the gratitude felt by the entire staff. "We are grateful for Page Ahead's efforts at putting great books into the hands, hearts, and homes of our boys and girls. The children are thrilled with the program."

Community Partner Profiles

In September Page Ahead joined with the Washington Reading Corps to place VISTA volunteers at educational sites in several counties around the state. After seven months, the results are impressive. Here's a sampling.

Thirty-four eastern Washington credit unions held a book drive during February's "**Banking for Books.**"

A powerful array of best-selling authors, poets, and commentators from a variety of literary genres will be appearing at "**Get Lit,**" a literary festival taking place in Spokane in April. The sponsor, **Eastern Washington University Press**, will host a book drive and provide space for a Page Ahead display. The festival includes several children's events, including an authors' tour of rural schools, a concert for kids, and a youth poetry slam. Page Ahead will be presenting a "Families Read" workshop to encourage parents to read with their children at home. For more information on "Get Lit," visit www.ewu.edu/getlit.

To celebrate National Fitness Month in February, 25 fitness centers across the state collected books for Page Ahead. This is the second year that members of health clubs contributed books to the "**Fit to Read**" book drive.

The **Gonzaga Women's Basketball Team** gave raffle tickets to every student who brought a book to a recent game. Assistant Athletic Director Heather Gores said that Page Ahead is a match for the team's desire to be of service. "We always do literacy projects, and so I think it was a natural fit to be behind Page Ahead. It's a great way to give back to the community." Sabrina Scott, Page Ahead's family involvement coordinator in Spokane, commented on the need for books in the region. "Most of the families are working several jobs. There are lots of single moms, and for them buying books for their kids is just not possible."

VISTA staff member Allison Orrico reports on exciting developments in **Snohomish County**. As a conclusion to one of Page Ahead's "Families Read" workshops, Odyssey Elementary School will provide a school bus so that families can be taken to the library and receive library cards. Parents will have a chance to practice the skills they've learned in the workshop, and children will be able to borrow books of interest to them. The broad selection of books at the library complements the brand-new books from Page Ahead that children receive to keep and treasure. "Children take great pride in the books they own, and this teaches respect for books and the written word," said Allison. For many children, the book they receive from Page Ahead is the first book they can keep at home. In some of the Page Ahead workshops, parents and children together decorate a cardboard bookshelf so that kids will have a special place to keep their books. One young book recipient chimed in, "I treat my book like respect, like a baby."

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A Will and a Way

Page Ahead gladly accepts certain non-cash gifts: shares of stock, interests in charitable remainder trusts and charitable lead trusts, and testamentary bequests. There are many ways to benefit your favorite charity while receiving favorable tax treatment. Remember us when implementing tax savings and estate plans or designating beneficiaries in your will. (If you have included Page Ahead, please let us know.) If you would like more information or ideas, please call Sam at 206.461.0123.

Let's Dish Up Literacy

Calling all Page Ahead partners and supporters. You can help us dish up literacy by recruiting your favorite restaurant to participate in *Book Plates* on August 18. Every year, participating restaurants donate a portion of their proceeds on *Book Plates* day to Page Ahead. In return, Page Ahead promotes their involvement and works to increase their business that day. In 2004, nearly 40 participants raised \$8,500 to fund our programs.

We want *Book Plates* to be bigger and better in 2005 and you can help make that happen. If you have a local hang-out, or know a restaurant manager/owner, ask them if they would be interested in participating or would like to learn about *Book Plates*. Charles at 206.461.0123 or cstuart@pageahead.org would love to know your suggestions, and he'll take it from there. Also, mark your calendars for *Book Plates* on August 18 and stay tuned.

book plates



dishing up
literacy

August 18, 2005

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Contribute new children's books
- When making purchases through amazon.com, access their website through www.pageahead.org and we will receive a percentage of the purchase price at no cost to you
- Volunteer on a committee, at an event, or in the office
- Organize a book drive with your workplace, school, or social group
- Donate 12 conference room chairs
- Make a donation in someone's name
- Designate Page Ahead as a recipient of your pledge to United Way or other workplace campaign
- For more information, to donate, or to sign up to volunteer, call us at 206.461.0123 or visit our web site at www.pageahead.org.



10,000 books for 10,000 kids

sponsored by Piper Jaffray

Spring is the time to set our sights on summer. Summer reading, that is!

To buy the books kids need to read over the summer, Page Ahead is organizing a sponsorship campaign—including newspaper ads and radio PSAs – between spring break and summer vacation. Community support is already building. The Seattle Sonics and Washington's Lottery have issued a challenge to Sonics fans, and will match donations up to \$10,000. Donation envelopes for the campaign will be available at local bookstores and other retailers in the months of April and May.

The campaign will be officially launched at Page Ahead's "A Taste for Reading" luncheon on April 6 at the Triple Door in downtown Seattle. Reservations can be made by calling 206.461.0123 or by visiting www.pageahead.org.

For more information about individual or corporate sponsorships, ranging from \$250 to \$10,000, contact Susan at swaller@pageahead.org or 206.461.0123.

Together, we can ensure that eager readers have a better chance to read this summer.

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Chapters is a publication of Page Ahead, a nonprofit organization that advances literacy and strengthens communities by promoting reading activities and providing new books to children at risk of academic failure and their families.

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Elizabeth Ruskauff Receives 2004 Volunteer Award

In presenting the award, Book Program Manager Jacki Crowther said, "Since 1998, Elizabeth has been behind the scenes at Page Ahead, tackling the tasks that are essential. She makes the wheels turn. As if that weren't enough, Elizabeth brings fantastic home-baked treats to the staff and volunteers."

I had my first experience with books written specifically for young people at the age of 14. I was babysitting and stumbled upon the "Cherry Ames" series in which the heroic nurse saves the day. Inevitably I was led to the Nancy Drew mysteries. These were easy reads, and I was done in a flash. Of course, I wanted more. More wasn't easy to come by in the small town in Wisconsin where I grew up. There was no bookstore. My school had no library. My education was "no frills," and I found textbooks dull.

That scarcity may account for my love of language, especially as used by Shakespeare. I was captivated by the language in his plays. Rich, layered, full of nuance and humor. I also love Jane Austen; the way she uses language to paint pictures and define characters. You practically feel their presence.



I received my primary school education in a world very different than the one we live in now. In the late 1930's, children received little personal attention from a teacher.

Kids who could not read well were considered slow. Hinderances—poor vision, dyslexia—weren't commonly considered. There wasn't much effort to discern the special, unique interests and talents of children and to appeal to those interests through literature. I like Page Ahead's approach: supplying kids with new books and with the opportunity to choose those books.

As a young adult, I began to see touring productions of musicals. I found I had no trouble suspending disbelief. Literature and theatre are somewhat similar: in books, you see the action in your head; in theatre, you see it on stage. My life

has given me lots of practice in living in my mind, which gives me an easy ability to enter the world of fiction. I have placed myself smack dab in the center of Seattle, because of access to the cultural opportunities that feed my soul. Shakespeare performed on a bare stage—what could be better? Well, perhaps cheesecake at intermission.

~E.R.

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