

# Children's Book Drive Effort Continues

Over 1,000 Books Donated During Trick-Or-Treat for Literacy Contest



**CAPTION: Joyce Walker's Big Pine State Preschool Class Earned a Pizza Party Prize!**

Citizens and organizations donated 1,012 children's books to First 5 Inyo County and Altrusa of the Eastern Sierra this past month during Trick-Or-Treat for Literacy. Bishop Union High School Student Juli Baker was the top individual participant in the book drive contest, bringing in 272 volumes. Baker won a \$50 gift card of her choice from the retailers available at Vons.

The organization that earned the Pizza Party Prize for highest group contribution was Big Pine State Preschool with 173 books. Other top contributors included staff from Rousek Toys, Elm Street School's Kid's Club, and Mr. Linse's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class also from Elm Street School.

Efforts continue to collect used children's books for free distribution at reading train depots that will be located in physician waiting rooms and businesses throughout Inyo County in 2009, and to collect new children's books for distribution through the Reach Out and Read Program at local pediatric offices during well child visits.

"Our goal is to change the way kids in our community view reading," explains Randee Arcularius, a member of the First 5 Inyo County Commission. "We want children to expect books and stories in public venues and at community events. We are hoping to integrate reading awareness into lots of children's activities in years to come."

First 5 Inyo County and Altrusa of the Eastern Sierra will continue collecting new and used books during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season. Gift wrapped book donation boxes will be located in school and county offices in Bishop, Independence, and Lone Pine, as well as in local businesses.

"The best gift a parent or other adult can give a child is the introduction and excitement of books," says Altrusa Spokesperson Ruth DeCray. "Reading not only promotes growth and imagination, but it can open each and every part of our world. As Americans, we believe that we each have equal opportunities, but the key to those opportunities is reading."

DeCray urges individuals to look for the gift-wrapped book donation boxes as they complete their holiday errands. "We'll be putting out lots of boxes, because thanks to a dedication for literacy by Altrusa members, we always have more literacy projects than we have available used books or funds to purchase new books."

Some local offices and organizations have agreed to purchase new children's books this Christmas in lieu of Secret Santa gift exchanges, while other individuals have promised to ask churches and clubs to help support this community-wide literacy effort.

For more information on how you, your workplace, or your club can participate this holiday season, contact Jody Veenker at 760-873-6453. First 5 will also be accepting used and new children's books at the First 5 Inyo County office at 162 Grove Street, Suite C in Bishop all year round.

"Research from the University of Maryland, the Brookings Institution, the Pew Center for Public Research, and The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis shows that by investing in the early education of young children, we are actually reducing future crime and welfare statistics," Explains Jean Dickinson, director of Inyo County Health & Human Services. "We are not only bringing joy to children by giving them access to the amazing adventure of reading, but we are also helping build a stronger community with healthier, more successful citizens – a pretty large reward for the price of a simple book."