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Reading Tent Project Promoted Literacy in Rock Hill Schools and Community Centers

Winthrop University

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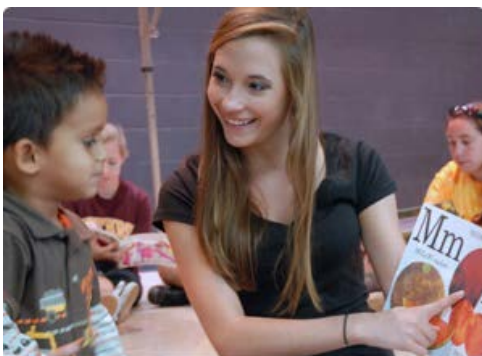
Reading Tent Project Promoted Literacy in Rock Hill Schools and Community Centers

Quick Facts

- Through Academy (ACAD) 101, all first-year students participated in “The Reading Tent Project”, a shared community service project aimed at improving childhood literacy.
- Under the banner of “The Reading Tent Project,” members of Winthrop’s freshman class spent seven weeks visiting local elementary schools and community centers, reading and donating books to local children.



Students promoted book donations at the Charlotte Knights game.



A reading tent set up at Independence Elementary School.

ROCK HILL, S.C. - Winthrop University students recently completed the first of a five-year literacy initiative by collecting thousands of books for area children and helping elementary-age students learn to read better.

Through **Academy (ACAD) 101**, all first-year students participated in “**The Reading Tent Project**,” a shared community service project aimed at improving childhood literacy. Under the banner of “The Reading Tent Project,” members of Winthrop’s freshman class spent seven weeks visiting local elementary schools and community centers, reading and donating books to local children.

The Center for Career & Civic Engagement coordinated the program, which was inspired by an African Reading Tent Program organized by **Book Aid International** in which tents are set up in rural communities with books to encourage reading for leisure.

To complete the Winthrop service project, teams of ACAD students, under faculty and peer mentor leadership, collected donated

children’s books and raised money to purchase new books. Each team of students hosted a reading tent, where they invited children to read for fun from the selection of books, and leave with a free book.

Winthrop students facilitated fun literacy games and one-on-one reading. Seven community partners participated in the program, including local elementary schools and community centers. “I received overwhelming positive feedback from our community partners about Winthrop students and the project,” said **Matt Sohner**, AmeriCorps*VISTA worker at Winthrop. “I am so excited to have been a part of a program that has such a meaningful impact on Rock Hill’s youth and know that it will get

even better in years to come.”

Organizers said the project was an overwhelming success. “Through our project, we hope Winthrop students can promote a love for reading by spreading the message to children that college students read books and they read for fun,” said **Ellin McDonough**, program director for service learning at the **Center for Career & Civic Engagement**.

The **Class of 2015**, over the course of their summer orientations and first semester, raised more than \$40,000 in children’s books and cash for the project, and gave more than 3,625 free books to 300 children in the **Rock Hill school district**. The thousands of books remaining are targeted for spring 2012 and summer projects aimed at improving childhood literacy.

In low-income communities, there is only one age-appropriate book per 300 children and statistics show children without access to books are well on their way to becoming one of the 33 percent of fourth graders who cannot read at the basic level.

Junior **Alicia Huff**, an exercise science major and a peer mentor, realized through the literacy program that not all children have books at their home, which gave her and other students a new appreciation for the books they had as children.

For more information, contact Sohner at sohnerm@winthrop.edu or call him at 803/323-3425.

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