

Children's centre gets reading boost



By Tony Pearson

?The more that you read/the more things that you'll know.

The more that you learn/the more places you'll go? - Dr. Seuss (Ted Geisel)

It is said that to a child, reading gives them a place to go when they have to stay where they are. So last Friday, the kids at North Hastings Children's Services did a lot of exploring, when they received shipments of new books from the Bancroft Lions Club, North Hastings Family Health Team, and Ashlie's bookstore.

The project grew out of partnerships forged with Scholastic Canada, one of the country's leading publishers and distributors of children's books and educational materials. When Lions International started its Reading Action Program to promote greater child literacy and encourage more kids to read on a regular basis, it entered into an agreement with Scholastic to allow the purchase of current titles at a significantly reduced price. At a recent regional Lions meeting, each club was given a 'starter' children's book as an incentive to sponsor reading in their area. Bancroft club president Bryan Adams received 'Give Me Back My Daddy' by renowned Canadian writer Robert Munsch. The club decided to pursue the initiative, and contacted Christine Winfield at Scholastic to order 35 new books ranging in reading level from pre-school to grade two. August Abolins of Ashlie's Books of Bancroft went through his collection of books at this level, and added 20 more discounted works to the Lions bag.

Another avenue to reading was opened by Angela Rail, the social worker at the North Hastings Family Health Team. As part of her mandate is counselling people who have suffered sexual abuse, she has an established contact with the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness. One of this agency's goals is to help Canadians who are dealing personally with the impacts of abuse, as well as those professionals who seek to provide assistance to those in need. In this connection, it too formed a partnership with Scholastic to provide children's literature to family shelters and counselling agencies. Rail drove to the agency's HQ in Newmarket to pick up another box of 35 books for North Hastings Children's Services.

NHCS executive director Jessica Anderson expressed her thanks. 'We needed new books badly. About half our current stock is in bad shape, with ripped and missing pages. But we don't get funding for books or craft materials for our kids; we have to rely on donations from the public. Yet the Hastings/Prince Edward Child and Youth Services Network has 'red-flagged' this county for having risks to early child development which are higher than the provincial average 'including language development. Since how

a child develops in the early years affects their lifelong health and well-being, having reading opportunities is critical to their future.?

Anderson also explained that the books will not only get read at their Heritage Way day-care facility, but at their before and after school programs at York River, Birds Creek, and Our Lady of Mercy elementary schools.

As a summary of why the Lions are so committed to reading action programs, president Bryan Adams quoted best-selling author James Patterson: ?There's no such thing as a kid who hates reading. There are only kids who love reading, and kids who haven't yet got the right book.?