



Kiwanis and R.I.F.

by Joe Adrignola, Past President



Young readers at Pleasant Street School enjoy their new books. Photo by Jackie Bonafide

The New England District of Kiwanis has partnered with the Reading Is FUNdamental (R.I.F.) organization to encourage young readers. This wonderful program distributes a minimum of three books to each child in the plan during the school year. The books are obtained from noted publishers of childrens' books by the sponsoring group at a considerate discount negotiated by the R.I.F. organization.

Here in Laconia, our Kiwanis Club worked with a committee of school officials to begin work on a local program. We chose third graders to be the children involved. The three elementary schools—Elm Street, Pleasant Street, and Woodland Heights—formed subcommittees consisting of parents, school librarians, teachers, reading specialists, and Kiwanians to select the books that will be distributed and to develop themes for the day to make it an exciting event for the kids. A requirement of the program is that all children of a particular group, in this case third graders, must be given books even if they are absent on distribution day.

Each book distribution day has a theme and is carefully planned to make it "FUN" for the kids. Such themes as "Favorite Authors," "March Into Spring" (complete with Sousa marches), and "Favorite Non-fiction Books" were chosen initially. Cookies or cake and other refreshments, partially donated by local supermarkets, help to round out the day.

Each child must be free to select their very own book. They chose from literally dozens of books purchased by Laconia Kiwanis. We stamp each book with a "This book belongs to" stamp and have each child write his or her name in.

A highlight of each book distribution day is a reading session, where Kiwanians and/or school officials take the time to read and interact with small groups of the children. That is the part enjoyed the most by everyone!

We sincerely hope that this program, which just started this school year, will help our community's children to build libraries at home and enjoy a lifetime of reading. The Kiwanis theme is "Serving the Children of the World." We play our part here in Laconia in many enjoyable ways and the R.I.F. Program is one of the best. ♦