

# The BUGLE

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## Raising a Reader: Library program helps parents

[Bill Helm](#)

Staff Reporter

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CAMP VERDE - In 2011, [Yavapai College](#) and First Things First established Raising a Reader, a literacy program that helps improve the reading skills of children ages 5 and younger.

In August, the Camp Verde Community Library and Camp Verde Head Start's home visitation program successfully brought Raising a Reader to the Camp Verde library.

Each week, the library provided red bags filled with age-appropriate books and a CD for children and their parents. At the program's conclusion on Dec. 11, participants received a certificate of completion and a blue library bag to continue the routine of checking out books at the library.

"I love their enthusiasm, how they come in with their bags and they get more books each week," said Nancy McClay, library clerk for the youth services department.

Though there is an inherent connection between the library and Raising a Reader, Carolyn Shelley said the program had never been run out of a library.

"This was a new venue for us," said Shelley, Raising a Reader Coordinator at Yavapai College. "I would certainly consider Raising a Reader a success. The library proved to be a viable setting. They saw using the book bags as a way to increase their book collection. Families indicated that they found many new titles in the bags, especially enjoying many of the multicultural ones."

Shelley also said that the Camp Verde Community Library and Camp Verde Head Start have both expressed interest in using Raising a Reader in the future.

As a home based visitor with Camp Verde Head



Camp Verde resident Joey Brown, 3, his mother Tina Brown, and 4-year-old Lake Montezuma resident Bodie Smith, from left, listen to Camp Verde Community Library clerk Nancy McClay read a story during the final Raising a Reader program of 2013 on Wednesday, Dec. 11. VVN/Bill Helm



Three-year-old Camp Verde resident Marri Sorensen watches Camp Verde Community Library clerk Nancy McClay present the final Raising a Reader program of 2013 on

Start, Connie Mendoza works with nine Spanish-speaking families across the Verde Valley. Wednesday, Dec. 11. VVN/Bill Helm

"The children love the library books," Mendoza said. "I quiz them, ask the kids which books they like. The parents like it because they're trying to learn English. I feel that they should learn both languages. The classes are done in English and in Spanish."

Raising a Reader is based on the principle that no single activity is as key to success in school as reading aloud to a child.

Rimrock resident Michelle Castillo said that Raising a Reader enhanced her 3-year-old son Kody's love of reading.

"He loved reading all the new books each week," Castillo said. "He couldn't wait to read his bag of books when we got home."

Camp Verde resident Hank Dykstra said that Raising a Reader was a good program for his 4-year-old granddaughter Bayley Dykstra.

"Bayley's beginning to pick up words she hadn't understood," Dykstra said. "It's good for all the kids. They like it and they can interact with others before kindergarten."

Raising a Reader promotes a routine of daily "book cuddling for parents and their children, birth to age 5," Shelley said. "The goal is to foster healthy brain development, parent-child bonding, language acquisition and early literacy skills.

"The program helps to effectively cultivate family reading habits and improves the reading readiness of young children," Shelley also said. "As a result, they enter school ready to learn and with a foundation to be lifelong learners. It is a research, evidence-based program."

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