WEEK 11 FOUNDATION MINUTE – EARLY READING = HEAD START

Several years ago, one of our District’s Rotarians participated in a Friendship Exchange in South Africa. During this visit, a Literacy project by the East London Rotary Club focused on ensuring that childcare workers and “Grannys” not only watched the youngsters under their care, but actually read to them – early and often. This emphasis on VERY early literacy in children – from birth – reinforced the concept that the more words children hear, see, and understand, the better and stronger their vocabulary becomes, supporting reading readiness for school.

This Rotarian shared her experience with her club – whose members were ready to broaden their local service projects to something new. Coincidentally, a presentation by the Lake County United Way to the club reinforced the importance of early reading to success in the county’s schools. Conversations with local organizations assisting lower income residents explored ways to bring books to families who may not have access to using local libraries.

A Literacy initiative for Lake County families is being launched to provide books to young children – from birth to age 5. The club’s Literacy committee has designed a program to distribute books through a local food pantry and community center, directly to the families who need it most. Bilingual messaging reinforces the fact that reading books to youngsters from birth until Kindergarten will give them a head start in reading, word development and ultimately success in school.