

Get 'Ready to Read' Mattoon

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By John Broux
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In its fifth year, the Ready to Read Across Mattoon program can be considered a success. What began as an experiment with 200 books has grown to an annually anticipated event by both students and the community alike.

The Ready to Read Across Mattoon program was begun by Aniete Traime and Belinda Hendrix, of the Mattoon Middle School. Traime had returned from a seminar in Chicago where she heard of a program whose purpose was to get everyone to read a book.

She thought the idea was so good that she wanted to duplicate the program in Mattoon. Traime sought out Belinda Hendrix and the two ladies began the program.

This year's book is "Abducted!" by Peg Kehret, which tells the tale of 13-year-old Bonnie whose 5-year-old brother is kidnapped.

"It is a mystery," explains Hendrix, "where circumstances force her to grow up fast. She refuses to sit back and do nothing and personally gets involved in finding her brother. She does not give up and fully believes he will return."

The story takes an unexpected

twist, leading to the climax of the story, according to Hendrix.

The program has been conducted for five years with the following titles being held in previous years – "Walking to the Bus Rider Blues," "Zach's Lie," "Running Out of Time," "Graduation of Jake Moon."

"Each year we start with the Rebecca Cottle list – books which are recommended for Middle

female characters, was about the right length, had an interesting cover, and we thought it would be good."

The program is supported through grant monies obtained by Traime, a book fair fund-raiser and a group of community businesses which have supported the program. Here's how it works: students go out into the community and present the program to differ-

ent entities and organizations. At this time, copies of the chosen book are given to each of these organizations. Members are asked to read the book and fill out a questionnaire, then pass the book on to someone else. The new reader is then to repeat the process.

The challenge is to the community of Mattoon, but I know that through friends in Charleston, they have asked if we have made our choice for this year," Hendrix continued.

The goal is to increase literacy with students and the community so that the community becomes acquainted with literacy awareness. The program has been such a huge success, the organizers will present the program at the Nation School Board Association annual meeting in San Francisco

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One of the big things we've been seeing is that students have been taking part in the program and making it theirs. — Belinda Hendrix, program co-coordinator

School Students – and the reading committee starts at the beginning of the school year," Hendrix explained. "Each week we have a discussion and see if the characters in the book of that particular week will appeal to students and if the storyline will be something they want to read.

"This is the third year that we have gone through each of the 20-25 books on the list. Nothing really fit what we were looking for, so we started looking at other titles that others have read," she said. "This book had both male and