

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA COLLEGE STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF EXCEED THEIR GOAL IN LITERACY CAMPAIGN FOR THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION.

Fort Myers, FL (January 13, 2010) – Southwest Florida College’s faculty, staff and students are helping the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida make sure that children have access to high-quality books in their homes. The college participated in the Literacy Buddies campaign last year, but didn’t expect that they would exceed their goal this year.

“Last year, we donated 3 books to every 50 students in the Early Learning Coalition,” said Pamela King, Director of Student Activities for Southwest Florida College. This year, the college decided to start out by agreeing to support 25 students, but exceeded that goal very quickly. “We are already up to supporting 75 students with books this year,” King said.

Students of the Education Club and the Criminal Justice Fraternity at Southwest Florida College, along with faculty and staff are corresponding with a child in order to improve the child’s literacy skills. For each letter written to the child, students and staff of SWFC include a book that pertains to the child’s interests.

Since the children range from 3 to 4 years of age, classroom teachers from Early Learning Coalition facilities will gather and distribute letters and books to the parents.

“Children are like little sponges and this is a great tool for parents to read to their child at home,” said Dr. Melanie Roberts, Director of Education at Southwest Florida College.

Dr. Roberts explained how the initiative ties in closely to the curriculum of the Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education programs. The curriculum of these programs requires the student to select appropriate reading materials for various reading levels. Since the children within the Early Learning Coalition facilities are at a lower level of reading, students of SWFC are looking for books that are of high interest with colors, pictures and that use monosyllable sight words such as *dog* or *cat*.

In a letter to SWFC, the CEO of the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida, Dr. Kathleen H. Reynolds, wrote that “fostering interest in books can have great positive impact on developing skills in reading and writing.”

The Early Learning Coalition knows “children who come to school ready to achieve have had exposure to lots and lots of conversation and books long before arriving in kindergarten. Unfortunately, many youngsters suffer from limited vocabularies and limited knowledge of how books work, simply due to lack of exposure.”

“It’s amazing how these children don’t have things we take for granted. We are glad to help them,” Dr. Roberts said.

Southwest Florida College is an accredited, private, institution of higher learning centrally located in Fort Myers, Tampa, Port Charlotte, and includes the Institute of Interior Design located within the Miromar Design Center in Estero. The College offers programs in Health Care, Business, Design, Education, Information Technology and Legal Studies. Its mission is to provide educational opportunities for individuals to acquire knowledge and skills that will help prepare them for rewarding careers in fields with high growth potential. For more information, call toll free 888-526-7973 or visit www.swfc.edu.