

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

YAN Montessori School leads the way for literacy

BY DON DECKER,
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Ms. Leticia Ancira, manager for the Montessori School in Middle Verde is coordinating a literacy program for the Nation. This initiative was begun by Ms. Ancira through the auspices of a local organization in Verde Valley that made contact with the Yavapai-Apache Nation through Ms. Ancira.

An organization called the Verde Valley Imagination Library (VVIL) based in Sedona, is promoting an on-going program to encourage parents to read to their children at an early age. Interestingly, famous country singer, Dolly Parton of the Dollywood Foundation created the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library over 20 years ago for a poor rural county in Tennessee "to ensure that every child has books, regardless of income". Over 1 million children are now enrolled in four countries. This foundation provides the book order system, publishes, labels and mails the books directly to the homes.

The VVIL promotes this program by making connections with various community groups by enrolling the children, paying for the books and the postage for mailing the books to participants.

Ms. Ancira's enthusiasm is sure to steer this activity in the right direction for the Nation as she said:

"On Monday, January 22, 2018 Susan Simon and Jennette Bill from the Verde Valley Imagination Library (VVIL) met with me to present the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program and get our students enrolled into the program.

I was immediately

on board and suggested that the school could become something like a "headquarters" for the Yavapai-Apache Nation community where we could advertise the program, accept applications and forward them to the VVIL for enrollment in the program, invite representatives from their club to come and speak about the program to the community perhaps during the back-to-school night, Christmas programs, or any other opportunities that make themselves available."

Subsequently, on January 30, another visit to the Montessori School was made by a Dr. Jean Barton who is spearheading this project through the Verde Valley. Dr. Barton is board president of Verde Valley Imagination Library and she is a retired pediatrician and associate professor of pediatrics.

"When parents talk, read and sing with their babies, young brains develop quickly and their language develops much earlier," said Dr. Barton. "Children behind in language and early literacy skills at age 3 are much more likely to benefit from this activity," she added.

Some of the key points offered through the Parton Imagination Library according to Ms. Ancira are:

- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth until they begin school, no matter their family's income (birth to five).

- It takes about two months to start receiving the books.

- If the child is close to turning five, do not get discouraged as they can still sign up at about 4 years and 9 months and would receive a book



Montessori students and teachers.

that introduces them to Kindergarten.

- Enrollment is for each child in the home from birth to 5 (not one enrollment per family)

- Families can enroll on the website as well.

Dr. Barton said that they send out over 1500 books every month to the Verde Valley area and because of expiring or non-forwarding addresses to recipients, 80 books are not deliverable. However, all is not lost, as forwarding addresses are found and local volunteers deliver the books to the new addresses. Dr. Barton also stated that it takes about 2 months for the book ordering system to catch up with the book recipients.

By July, 2018, Dr. Barton hopes to have a total of 1800 children in Verde Valley enrolled in the reading program.

"There's no cost or obligation to the family. The family can expect to

receive the first book at their home 2-3 months after enrollment. The books are chosen by the parents, teachers and developmental specialists," said Dr. Barton.

Susan Simon, a Rotary Club volunteer, who is also part of the VVIL, said that the books are age appropriate. "The earlier ones are primarily picture books and they are chosen for the various age categories."

Dr. Barton feels that the reading program is a win-win situation. "The VVIL would like to partner with all agencies serving the children in Verde Valley and the goal is to encourage the parents to talk and read to babies. The earlier, the better. I believe that offering the same opportunities to all children regardless of socio-backgrounds, racial cultural or whatever economic back-

grounds—all the kids benefit in the end. It's good for everybody."

Following is some important information for the program whereby parents can enroll online: www.imaginationlibrary.com.

Ms. Ancira feels that after the information gets out there, that the parents should register with a person involved with the reading program. Two other organizations located on the Yavapai-Apache Nation will also act as a source point for enrolling in the Imagination Library program. "Through these established partnerships that includes the Day Care Center, the WIC Program and the Montessori School located on the Yavapai-Apache Nation, children will be able to enroll in the book-reading program at these locations," said Ms. Ancira.

"The parents like the

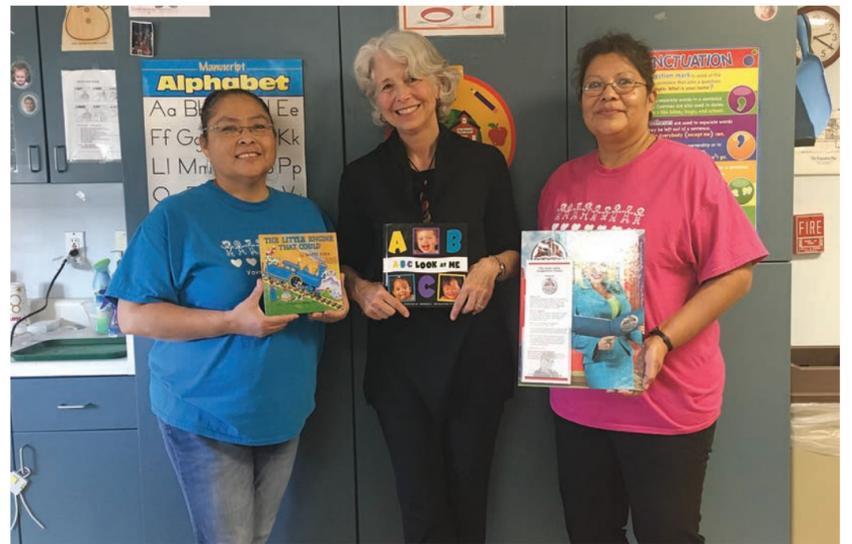
face to face contact. I'm one of those persons, if I can do something in person, I will try to do it. They can ask me questions and bring their children to enroll (in Montessori) and that way, we get to know them and they get to know us."

Ms. Ancira believes that longitudinal data regarding the distribution of books across Verde Valley will be important to determine the effectiveness of the reading program: "I would love for you (to VVIL) to bring back a success story (to show) that the families of the Yavapai-Apache Nation have really created this opportunity to enroll their children that they're benefiting from this (the book reading program) and we know that it's positive for them to be enrolled in this (reading) program."

Verde Valley Imagination Library visits YAN Day Care Center



Linda with Dr. Barton and Susan Simon-V.Verde Imagination Book Project.



Dr. Jean Barton visits with Day Care Center staff today.

BY DON DECKER,
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Dr. Jean Barton, a retired pediatrician and associate professor who is president of the Verde Valley Imagination Library based in Sedona visited with Ophelia Tewawina, manager of the Day Care Center (L) and Bernadine Valenzuela, Lead Child Care provider.

The Imagination program is an international

reading program designed for children up to the ages of 5 years old that was begun by country singer Dolly Parton over 20 years ago. The program serves children in 4 countries.

The Day Care Center will also act as a resource point for the Imagination program whereby children can be enrolled in the program on-line. Each child will receive a book each month until they are 5 years old.

If there is more than one child per household,

each child will receive a book each month.

The Montessori School of the Nation initiated the Imagination program after a meeting on January 30 with the Verde Valley Imagination Library organization represented by Dr. Barton and Susan Simon, a Rotary Club volunteer.

The Rotary Club is part of the VVIL. Simon said that the books are age appropriate.

The YAN -WIC program is also a participant in the Imagination program.