

MORRISDALE - West Branch Elementary students have an incentive to keep reading in the summer thanks in part to a grant from the Clearfield County Charitable Foundation.

The grant supports the Summer R.E.A.D (Read and Explore Adventures Daily) Challenge that awards points to students for visits to the library and for how much they read.

This program began last summer and followed the previous reading program. Participation increased last year from 12% to 30%.

Among the prizes is “book fair bucks” which the children can use to purchase books at the school’s scholastic book fair.

“I gave them choices and they chose what they wanted,” said coordinator and reading specialist Ashley White.

She was inspired by one of the students in the 2016 program who was incredibly happy to receive money to spend on books, saying “I can go buy what I want!”

“Unfortunately I see some of our readers, whether it be strugglers or above benchmark students, not having the opportunity to purchase new books or books of their choice because their family simply doesn’t have money to spend on extras such as books or other reading resources.”

She thought about how to get the books they wanted “in their hands” and that was when she came up with the Summer READ program.

During her first years at the school, White said only 3% to 5% of the students were involved in the summer reading program. The idea of awarding funds to purchase books as incentives for the kids turned everything around.

In 2017, 151 students were involved. They earned over \$1,600 in scholastic book bucks for reading 408,320 pages.

Part of the program is an assembly in September that acknowledges the students and presents awards. 19 of the students beat the Teacher Summer Reading Group’s 3,908 points.

White was amazed that in this rural area, they were somehow able to make it to the library on a regular basis asking family members and others for rides.

“These ‘guardians’ didn’t just come in and sit down,” she explained. “They read with the students, helped the students look for books and asked questions while they were reading.”

This interaction showed the students that someone cared about them and wanted them to succeed.

“Literacy is so important and children, adults and elderly people need it to be successful in life,” White said.

This year the Clearfield County Charitable Foundation awarded over \$18,000 to 27 different local non-profit groups and agencies.

The CCCF itself is a local charitable endowment that funds charities within Clearfield County allowing them to grow and benefit the local community forever. It provides a simple way to fulfill multiple charitable interests while keeping administrative expenses to a minimum. All funds go to the local charities.

Currently the Foundation has 44 different funds including many local charitable groups and 12 scholarship funds. As of December 2017, the Foundation’s assets have a market value close to \$4 million.

