Bringing Books and Joy to Vineland Students by Jane Arochas

NJLA Board Member Jane Arochas orchestrated a major book donation to the Vineland School District through BookSmiles, an organization that collects and disseminates gently used books to children in Southern Jersey. Arochas recently retired from Vineland Public Schools and decided to give back to the community. She met Larry Abrams at the NJEA Convention and then reconnected with Abrams at a volunteer event at their synagogue. Within a couple of weeks, Jane put together a project which enabled BookSmiles to deliver over 5,500 books to four schools in her former district.

“BookSmiles’ goal is to build up the personal libraries of youngsters and promote a love of reading,” said Larry Abrams, a Lindenwold High School English teacher who founded the organization last year. Arochas and Abrams have a long-term goal for the district and, hopefully, for other recipients as well. Their mission is to provide children in Title 1 schools the chance to build personal libraries of at least 100 books. As you know, many children in New Jersey don’t have the opportunity to go on Scholastic Book Fair shopping sprees, and many of them have yet to step foot in a Barnes and Noble bookstore.

By getting books into the homes of *all* our students, we will foster the love of reading in each and every one of them. Over the last year, BookSmiles has collected, sorted and distributed well over 55,000 books, through the volunteer efforts of Abrams and his students at Lindenwold High School

**Do you want to be part of the movement to provide books to children in New Jersey?**

Here’s how:

* Put out a call to your neighbors, friends and folks on social media.
* Have the donors deliver the books to you or to a convenient drop-off point.
* Sort them into age-appropriate piles and box them.
* Distribute them as you see fit.

If you are interested in learning more about BookSmiles, visit BookSmiles.org and follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Share our page to help promote literacy!