

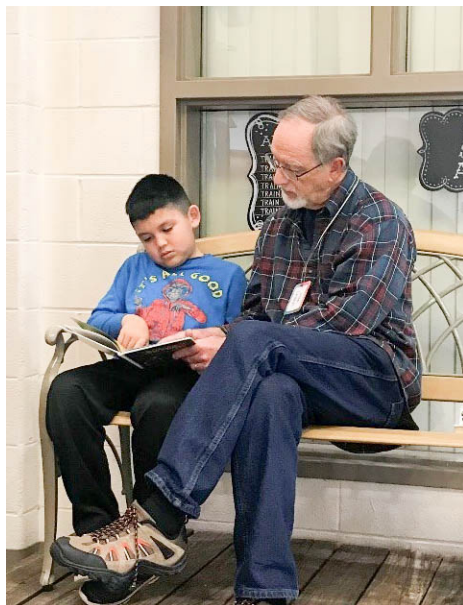
Positive News for the Iva Community

Local Volunteers Have a Heart 4 Schools

By Deb Madden

On any given day if you're lucky enough to walk Flat Rock Elementary's hallways, you'll be privy to a multitude of wonderful sights and sounds. You might see children lying down on their tummies on taped floors as their jet toys are propelled by colorful balloons. You might even run into Mr. Bib, aka, The Michelin Man, visiting as a result of our partnership with Michelin North America. You'll definitely see children and educators buzzing with the excitement of learning. But then you may notice two people softly reading together on the park benches that grace the halls. Herein lies our quiet heroes. Here, you'll find Reading Buddies.

Two years ago, Mrs. Debbie Alexander, a former mathematics teacher at Starr-Iva Middle and Crescent High School, and devoted member of Flat Rock Baptist Church approached the school with the Heart 4 Schools initiative—a collaboration between the SC State Department of the Education and the SC Baptist Convention. Flat Rock is thankful as the Reading Buddies have been a blessing



Austin & Mr. Callahan

to our students and teachers.

John, who has been with his Reading Buddy since third grade, states, "I love having a reading buddy because she's very nice and she helps me with my struggles in reading. Mrs. Alexander is understanding of the things I'm saying and she's very open-hearted. We both help each other. Sometimes if she doesn't have her glasses, I help her. Mrs. Alexander is very loving." Mrs. Alexander stated that she "looks forward to Mondays so she can see her reading buddies."

Christy Dodd, Flat Rock Elementary Principal states, "For three years, we have had a dedicated group of volunteers show up for our students to create relationships and improve reading skills. These individuals have worked tirelessly not only to make sure our students are able to achieve in the classroom, but they make sure each student has a champion he or she can depend on. We are so blessed by our Reading Buddies

partnership at Flat Rock Elementary School and look forward to a longstanding relationship with them."

This year, the program added high school Reading Buddies along with our existing adult reading buddies equalling a total of 21 buddies serving the children.

"I'm extremely proud of the Crescent students who have been consistent volunteers with the Reading Buddies program this year. I think they have had a taste of what education can be in its purest form, and I know they've made a positive difference in the lives of their young mentees. I was moved earlier in the year by a request from Cheyenne Crocker, one of Crescent's volunteers. She asked for permission to go eat lunch at Flat Rock for her buddy's birthday. She ended up taking cupcakes as a surprise and made a little girl's day. Students like Cheyenne and her fellow volunteers provide me with some much needed optimism about the future of our community," states Alex Smith, Crescent High School Career Development Coordinator .



Cooper & Cheyenne (CHS student)



Makenzie & Mrs. Gentry

The Reading Buddies not only give of their time to read and mentor students, they provide Christmas gifts to all the staff, bring tasty treats, and they pray for the school.

For more Heart 4 Schools information, please see the following links:
<https://vimeo.com/203876263>
<http://www.scbaptist.org/heart4schools/>



John & Mrs. Alexander



Bryce & Mrs. Jones