



Dunn Elementary School Media Center Administrator Amy Black and students Eric Polhemus and Josie Brett immersed in reading.

Rotary READ

by Peter Connor

Rotary READ Fort Collins is a week-long reading event held during the fall semester of each academic year. Established 10 years ago, the event pulls the local Rotary Clubs into a unique coalition with the Poudre School District elementary schools and the Fort Collins Public Library. The Rotary Clubs' mission is to promote reading habits, improve reading skills and encourage a love for reading among students in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

Before the event, each elementary school receives a Rotary READ Week information packet explaining its goals and rewards. Parental signature forms that each participating student must hand in at the end of the designated reading week are also included. Packets are made available at the Fort Collins Public Library also, in order that charter schools, private schools and home-schooled students may participate as well.

To be eligible for a reward each child must read, or be read to, for at least 15 minutes each night during Rotary READ Week. Each student returning a signed form receives a small prize. Their names are also entered into a general drawing in which they have a chance to receive a \$10 book certificate redeemable at participating area bookstores.

After the 2004 Rotary READ Week, local Rotarians presented over 1000 students with book certificates (15 to 20 percent of all participants). The presentations, with local Rotarians attending, are held at special school ceremonies throughout the Poudre School District. For some, the certificate represents their first book purchase.

In addition, Rotary READ Fort Collins sponsors an annual visit from a nationally recognized children's author. The visiting author participates in a weeklong round of assemblies hosted by selected elementary schools throughout the district. The selected schools earn their host privileges, as a final

Rotary READ Week reward, in recognition of the number of students that participated in the program.

Writer Kathleen Duey, the 2004 Rotary READ Fort Collins visiting author, has a local connection. Raised in Colorado, Ms. Duey lived in Fort Collins for two years and graduated from Fort Collins High School. She now lives and works in southern California. Having authored over 50 children and young adult books, including the highly acclaimed series titles *American Diaries*, *Hoofbeats* and *The Unicorn's Secret*, she is very popular with young students both here and across the country.

Since 1995 every PSD elementary school has been offered an author visit every third year, and almost every public, private and home schooled student has had an opportunity to attend a visiting author assembly before entering junior high.

Major funding for Rotary READ Fort Collins is accomplished through a partnership with Northern Colorado Pizza Hut. Through a special BOGO (Buy One, Get One) Pizza Hut Card promotion, Rotary Club members each year sell over 1,000 Pizza Hut Cards at ten dollars a piece. Good for one full year, each cardholder is entitled to one free pizza for each pizza purchased at the regular price. One hundred percent of the proceeds (over \$10,000 annually) are then donated to Rotary READ Fort Collins, making Northern Colorado Pizza Hut the program's primary funding source.

Combined with valuable corporate sponsors, media publicity and individual contributions, Jeffery Porter, chair of the 2004 Rotary READ Fort Collins committee, believes that "even more children will be turned on to reading this year than ever before." ■

Rotary READ promotes good reading habits, improves reading skills and encourages a love for reading.