Sunset Elementary Community Promotes Literacy at Annual 'Joy of Reading' Event

SAN YSIDRO — Sunset Elementary School's library was transformed into a whimsical space when parents and community members gathered March 4 to read their favorite children's books with students at Sunset's annual "Read Across America & the Joys of Reading" event, held in honor of children's author Dr. Seuss and the National Education Association's "Read Across America Day."

More than 50 parents, staff and community members – including firefighters from the San Diego County Fire Department – participated in the event, which invited adults to select a favorite children's book from the library and visit classrooms to read their story aloud.

"The 'Joy of Reading' program gives our parents the opportunity to share the experience of interacting with their children inside the classroom," Sunset Elementary School Principal Efrain Burciaga said. "Our teachers and staff have been looking forward to this event for months, and have worked very hard to plan and organize a memorable day that everyone enjoys."

Children giggled and clapped as storytellers shared funny poems and pictures from their books. Some adults wore Dr. Seuss-themed costumes to get into character, including Sunset Language, Speech and Hearing Specialist Ruth Rivera, who dressed as the Cat in the Hat to read "Green Eggs and Ham" to Evelyn Guanco's second-grade class.

"It's very exciting to have a parent, community member or heroic firefighter enter the classroom and read aloud to our students," said Guanco. "It's hard to tell who has more fun, the guest readers or the students to whom they read. This special day is something everyone looks forward to every year."

Sunset's "Read Across America & the Joys of Reading" was the culminating activity to a weeklong celebration during which students and staff promoted literacy and paid tribute to Dr. Seuss characters by dressing in special colors, donning wacky hats and mismatched socks, and sporting creative hair styles.

"It is wonderful to see the Sunset community join together to support this annual event and continue to encourage our students to develop a love for reading," San Ysidro School District Superintendent Dr. Fonseca said. "Planting the seeds of literacy now gives our students the opportunity to build a solid foundation to build upon as they become global learners."

"Read Across America" Day was established by the National Education Association in 1998 to encourage childhood literacy. Sunset Elementary School began hosting the 'Joy of Reading' event in honor of "Read Across America" in the early 2000s.

This year's National Education Association's "Read Across America" Day was observed on March 2, but the San Ysidro School District scheduled readings on March 4 to accommodate parents' schedules. Additional readings were held at the Preschool and Child Development Center and Smythe Elementary School.

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READACROSSAMERICA1: Sunset Elementary School parent Keila Gonzalez reads a "Clifford" book to Ana Magallanes' second-grade class. Gonzalez was one of more than 50 adults who volunteered to read aloud to students during Sunset's "Read Across America & the Joys of Reading" event on March 4.

READACROSSAMERICA2: San Diego Firefighters visited Sunset Elementary School on March 4 for Sunset's annual "Read Across America & the Joys of Reading" event. More than 50 parents and community members visited the school and read their favorite books to students.

READACROSSAMERICA3: Evelyn Guanco's second-grade class was visited by "the Cat in the Hat" on March 4 during Sunset Elementary School's annual "Read Across America & the Joys of Reading" event. The event was the culminating activity to a weeklong series of events that promoted literacy and paid tribute to author Dr. Seuss.