"I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you!
I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you.
So let's make the most of this beautiful day;
Since we're together we might as well say...
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?
Won't you be my neighbor?"

-- The World According to Mister Rogers: We Are All Neighbors

#NationalVolunteerWeek is a time to celebrate the impact of volunteer service on our communities. The local events, volunteer projects and social media conversations that take place during this week demonstrate that volunteer service unites -- bringing people together to tackle society's tough challenges, spark change, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Today, the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (SCGLR) celebrates you, the volunteers who are making a meaningful difference by addressing the most common issues and obstacles that impact a child's ability to read.

The Summer Book Challenge is a program implemented by SCGLR and promoted through local summer camps to encourage children to read to help reduce the "summer slide."

Parents, grandparents, childcare professionals, early learning educators, and caregivers are also encouraged to participate in the...
Indeed, not only is shopping a pleasure, but volunteering is a joy!

-- Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation

On April 3, 2018, the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading assembled Kindergarten Readiness bags to be distributed to children in Manatee County. All the materials were laid out in a large room at Manatee Technical College, and like magic, with the help of United Way Suncoast and highly motivated volunteers from Publix, the thousands of learning tools became 1,500 Kindergarten Readiness Bags. The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading will distribute the bags in partnership with The School District of Manatee County and the Early Learning Coalition of Manatee County. The materials included in the bags were provided through the generosity of The Patterson Foundation. These bags will be given to the families of incoming kindergartners with the intent of helping to prepare them for school by strengthening their basic skills.

Manatee County parents and educators listed increased parent engagement as one of their most important aspirations. National Education Association (NEA) research shows that family engagement in schools improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents' confidence in their children's education. Students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior. Teachers and parents working together as a team give children their best pathway to success. The interactions between parent and child when using the Kindergarten Readiness Bags will build literacy, increase parent engagement, and lead to better outcomes for our most vulnerable children.

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."

— ELIZABETH ANDREW
We asked a few volunteers what inspires them to serve. Here's what they had to say.

“Hands down, the best-paying and most important job I’ve ever had is as reading tutor in first grade at Visible Men Academy. Technically, it’s a volunteer gig—no money is involved—but paychecks come in the boys’ smiles and unreserved trust. When one of my little guys fluently reads a book to me that I had to read to him a few months ago, it’s a bonus payday.

We celebrate achievements with high fives, fist bumps, little jigs, and selfies, when the student becomes teacher and patiently instructs me on how to position the camera. Truth: I get way more than I give by volunteering as a reading tutor.”

--- Kathy Walker Van Citters

“It has been a treat to work with Laurel Hinds and all our Tuttle Turtles. The kids report to our desks with various degrees of eagerness. The kindergartners are proud to show the progress they have made during the last week with their reading skills, while the 3rd graders sometimes simply want to plow through as quickly as possible. Our assignment is to ask comprehension questions to determine if the fluent readers understand the content. These kids are reading at a pretty high level in their science texts, so that is a reassuring nod to the future.”

--- Marjie Peter

“Through the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, I learned how few books there are in the homes of students living below the poverty level, how many fewer words those students hear in their formative years, and how critical reading is to their development and their futures. I remember being read to, learning to read, and how great it was to have that close personal interaction with my parents.

During my time as the Director of Community Outreach for Goodwill, I helped to create the Good Readers program. On several occasions, Good Reader volunteers from the community read with students at Alta Vista Elementary and Visible Men Academy, and at the end of each session, students were gifted a book of their very own. Additionally, Goodwill, Rotary Club of Sarasota, and the Suncoast Campaign For Grade-Level Reading facilitated the distribution of 24,000 Magic School Bus books to local students! And, each year, local Rotary clubs provide dictionaries to every 4th grader in Sarasota and Manatee counties.

Reading, literacy, and access to books remain a priority for me. I am currently tutoring a student at Visible Men Academy and encourage everyone to find time to read with a child. It’s an investment that will reap immeasurable rewards.”

--- Rick Hughes
"Volunteers are the back bone to supporting a mission, a cause, a movement. When you are in service to something bigger than yourself, you get far more out of the experience. Volunteering is ageless, creates camaraderie, community, and change. As Gandhi said, 'the best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service of others.'" -- Shana Zamikoff

SCGLR celebrates the wonderful volunteers who are making a difference in our region.

Thank you for lending your time, talent, and voice to support the causes you care about. ❤️

We welcome your thoughts. Contact us at info@GradeLevelReadingSuncoast.net.