WKU Literacy Ambassadors – Book Bags for Tornado Victims

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The very first project for WKU’s newly created Literacy ambassadors was putting books back into the hands of students whose lives were upended by the December ’21 tornadoes.

Amy Bingham has the story in this week’s View from the Hill.

It was a collaboration between the Bowling Green Noon Rotary Club and WKU’s Literacy Education Program that resulted in dozens of tornado victims getting individualized book bags and the timing couldn’t have been better.

Jaylah Saintil \ Second grader

Dr. Leslee Tarbett \ Assistant Professor of Literacy Education

Malori Wilson \ WKU Senior

Dr. Cody Rich \ Principal, Jennings Creek Elementary

Rose Hadi \ Second Grader

“There was trauma related to the tornado coming up from the anniversary, right? As you got closer to the anniversary you saw more and more students kind of struggling a little bit with their emotions and how to deal with that.”

Christmas came a little early last month for some students at Jennings Creek Elementary who were greatly impacted by the tornadoes just over one year ago.

“I got my favorite books. One of them was called the Dark Dark place and the creepy stories and I like that book.”

Using ten thousand dollars from the Bowling Green Noon Rotary Club, WKU’s Literacy Ambassadors filled book bags for students at a half a dozen schools in the city and county.

“One of the things that came out of this is that the students really understood that’ it’s important to get to know the needs of kids and get to know their interests and really be able to respond to that in a meaningful way.”

“We can rebuild personal libraries that they might have lost in the tornadoes or just like get their mind off of it, you know that traumatic event and help them move forward.”

Jennings Creek Principal Cody Rich says it was even more special that the ambassadors worked with school librarians to choose books each student would love.

“I was flabbergasted that it was individualized. I didn’t know they put in all that work and time to make sure that those books were individualized for each kid.”

Rose Hadi says she was happy and grateful that a Junie B Jones book was included in her bag.

“It’s like learning how to read, because it’s a lot of pages.”

“There’s power in books for learning but there’s also power in books for healing so this project did all of those things.”

Applications are still being taken for area students who were impacted by the tornado and could use books in the home. For information you can call 745 -4324.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

Contributions for this project also came from Half Priced Books and the WKU Bookstore.

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