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Five Covington Students Recognized for Winter Reading Challenge

TUE, 01/26/2021 - 17:17 RCN NEWSDESK

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Five Covington students were recognized by the city for their dedication to the Read Ready Covington program.

In a news release, the city noted that 720 young readers in the program participated in the recently completed Mayor's Winter Reading Challenge.

"It's just stunning how engaged these students were in improving their reading skills," Mayor Joe Meyer said. "This is exactly the energy that Read Ready Covington is striving to foster."

Those five students recently were recognized as Grand Prize winners for their grade level, based on the amount of time they spent on the literacy apps and the number of books and skill-building exercises they completed.

The five:

- Pre-schooler Maliyah Collins of James E. Biggs Early Biggs Childhood Education Center, taught by Breanna Engel.
- Kindergartener Jordan Geyer of Glenn O. Swing Elementary, taught by Catherine Burwinkel.
- First-grader Lamarck Carter of Latonia Elementary, taught by Shawna Davis. (Lamarck was the top user across all age and grade levels.)
- Second-grader Carter Hansen of Glenn O. Swing Elementary, taught by Chelsea Koenig.
- Third-grader Addison Johnson of Glenn O. Swing Elementary, taught by Jennifer Young.

The challenge ran Nov. 16 to Dec. 31, 2020, and was open to all 2,500 Covington students enrolled in the CleverKidsUniversity (ages 2 to 5) and Footsteps2Brilliance (ages 5 to 8) apps.

Each of the five winners was awarded \$500 plus a prize package that included games, storybooks, activities, and treats. Their teachers also received an "appreciation package" that included books and games.

In addition, a random raffle winner was selected each week of the seven-week challenge from the pool of students who were averaging at least 15 minutes a day, five days a week on the apps.

Those winners were: Ryder Cline of Toddler Town, Reagan Litke of James E. Biggs Early Childhood Education Center, Ayra Johns of Latonia Elementary, Anthony Collins of James E. Biggs Early Childhood Education Center, Leo Valezquez of Holy Cross Elementary, Jordan Noah of Sixth District, and Elias Morales Mendez of Sixth District.

Cash prizes were made possible through the generosity of Robert and Dell Ann Sathe. Multiple donors contributed to the prize packages.

The challenge was offered through the Read Ready Covington (RRC) early childhood literacy program, which the city kicked off in November 2018 with help from a range of partnering organizations as a way to get the city's youngest kids off to a better start in their school careers.

RRC's foundation is the use of apps provided free for Covington parents that provide activities and reading exercises for kids and help parents introduce reading skills to their young children.

Use of those apps has increased dramatically during the coronavirus pandemic, which has forced the on-and-off-again closure of schools and daycare facilities, said Mary Kay Connolly, who is coordinating RRC. Some teachers in both public and private schools have used the apps as part of specific non-traditional instruction (NTI) assignments, she said.

"The Reading Challenge was a fun program, and it certainly inspired a lot of young readers to expand their engagement with the apps," Connolly said. "But what we hope happens – and what we saw happen after the first Challenge earlier this year – is that the kids keep reading on a regular basis even after the contest is over."

-Staff report

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