



The Children's Book Bank Distributes Its Millionth Book to Portland Head Start Student October 28, 2021

The Children's Book Bank distributed our millionth book to a lucky Portland child yesterday! Serenity White, a pre-K student who attends Portland Public Schools Kelly Head Start, came by the Children's Book Bank warehouse with her family to collect her very special book. In addition, Serenity's entire classroom is receiving a library of new books featuring characters of color and culturally relevant stories, sponsored by Umpqua Bank.

Since 2008, the Children's Book Bank has been collecting gently used books from the community and engaging thousands of Portlanders each year to clean and restore the books. Books are then distributed in bundles of 14 to local families through program partners like the local Head Start, or given to underserved schools to distribute during free, school-wide book fairs for older students. In 2015, we launched *A Story Like Mine* to purchase books with diverse representation to include in our book bundles to better meet the needs of the children and families we serve.

Distributing the millionth book is a milestone moment that represents the work of thousands of volunteers, donors, and community partners each year. To everyone who has ever dropped off a book donation, cleaned or sorted books in our warehouse or at home, organized a book drive or a fundraiser, sewed a tote bag, made a monetary donation, or made your mark in any of the other ways we receive support, we say THANK YOU! This milestone is only possible because of the dedication and love shown by our community.

The Impact of Books

This wasn't the first book bundle that the White family has received. Serenity's older brother Dumari received a book bundle from the Children's Book Bank when he was a pre-K student, and his mom, Madison White, says he loved the books—especially reading them with his family every night before bed, which gave them extra time to be together and helped Dumari overcome the difficulty he had pronouncing certain letters.

Madison says that when Dumari had problems with pronouncing letters or sounds when he was younger, he would often get frustrated and just want to point at what he was trying to say instead of pronouncing it. Once he received his book bundle, he had fun finding pictures in the books and sounding out the words with his parents. "After a while he would just pick up the

books and try to tell me about what the picture was doing and tell me about the words and letters,” says Madison.



In addition to receiving the millionth book, Serenity’s entire classroom is also receiving a library of new books sponsored by Umpqua Bank. Umpqua Bank is a long-time partner of the Children’s Book Bank, and donated \$1,000 for the purchase of entirely new, inclusive books for the classroom. Corporate partners like Umpqua who come in regularly for book-cleaning sessions are a huge part of how we’ve reached the millionth book milestone—thank you to our corporate volunteers and donors!

Stories like Dumari’s help illustrate why getting books into the homes of pre-K kids is so important. Preschool children who read more often and for longer lengths of time not only develop essential pre-reading and reading skills that help them when they enter school, but are more likely to see reading as a fun and rewarding experience instead of work. Reading together is also an important way for parents and children to bond and practice healthy social and emotional skills.

We hope Serenity enjoys her book bundle as much as Dumari! Here’s to a million more books to give to families like theirs in our community.