



Rotary Helps Deliver Millionth Book to Las Vegas Elementary School

by **Bernard Hunt, Rotary Club of Las Vegas West**

All photos by **Bernard Hunt**

So, Rotarians around the globe set a Guinness world record for gathering the most donated books? But what do we do with them?

Books are meant to be read. So, getting them into the hands and eyes of readers would be a good thing.

Rotarian Duncan Lee, past president of the Rotary Club of Las Vegas West in Nevada, and District 5300 PDG Charlie Barr did their bit in getting many of the books to the right place.

Calling on the aid of his wife, Irene, Lee helped to get the books to a group called Spread the Word Nevada, whose major project, called Kids to Kids, is a children's literacy project. Irene Lee is secretary of the nonprofit Spread the Word Nevada.



From left, senior Sade McNeal (name pronounced Shad-ay, like the singer); Lisa Habighorst; and Claudia Vega, a junior.



From left, Emily Kelton; Yessenia Guzman; and Edgar Guzman, all juniors. The two Guzmans are not related.

Rotary International's world record gathering effort tallied almost a quarter of a million books. Ten percent of them, or 24,000 volumes, were shipped to Spread the Word Nevada in Las Vegas.

With helping hands from a Las Vegas High School service group called Partnership at Las Vegas (known as PAL), the group sorted the books recently. The books will be delivered to children in local at-risk schools who

might not otherwise have their own books at home.

The PAL students devote one day a month to a philanthropic effort.

Aiding the Kids to Kids project was an easy choice, said junior Vince Cellis.

"To be successful in life you need two things," he said. "You need to run and not listen to any voice that tells you not to. And you need to read."

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Also on hand to help sort the books into appropriate grade levels were the Lees; Lisa Habighorst, Executive Director of Spread the Word Nevada; and Laurie Porter-Hartig, a former teacher who founded the organization seven years ago.

In September, Kids to Kids distributed its one-millionth book at an event at a Las Vegas elementary school featuring Las Vegas Strip headliner magician Mac King, who long has been an advocate for children's literacy.

"Reaching the one-millionth book distribution mark is a momentous milestone for us and we wouldn't have been able to accomplish this without the support of the community and organizations that believe in the importance of children's literacy," said Habighorst.

The 24,000 books donated to the organization by Rotary International were part of Rotary's Wide World of Books collected by Rotarians attending the 2008 RI Convention in Los Angeles in June.

That effort drew exactly 242,624 books and set a Guinness record for the most donated in a week.

"This record demonstrated careful planning, creativity, and a true commitment from the heart," Guinness adjudicator Danny Girton Jr. told Rotarians at the convention. "We applaud your efforts and welcome you to the Guinness World Records family."

Ingo Werk, of the Rotary Club of Wilmington, Calif., who chaired the project, joined Girton on stage to thank and congratulate Rotarians for achieving the record.

"Rotary's commitment to literacy is a commitment with love, not only for our society at large but especially for our children. Love is all you need, to read," said Werk.



From left, Marissa Duncan; Alexis Brooks; Andy Nguyen; Rosa Popp; and Ruth Wittig. All are juniors except Andy.