



My Very Own Book Quarterly Newsletter

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a Difference
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Celebrate "National Make a Difference to Children" Month and Benefit MVOB

Our children are a segment of the population who are heavily impacted by the decline in the economy, yet the ability to improve the situation is out of their control. The My Very Own Book program empowers them to improve their literacy and also earn new books they might otherwise not be able to afford. During these tough economic times, MVOB believes that it is now more important than ever to truly celebrate National Make a Difference to Children month.

In order to celebrate this month and raise the funds we need to truly make a difference to children through our reading incentive program, MVOB is hosting our first fundraiser. We hope you will



James Earl Jones in *The Reading Room*

consider joining us on July 30th at 7:00 p.m. at the Angelika Film Center in Plano for a private viewing of the movie *The Reading Room*. We will have heavy hors d'oeuvres catered and donated by Romano's Macaroni Grill and free door prize drawings for all attendees. To learn more or to RSVP, please visit <http://www.myveryownbook.org/MovieEvent.html>. Questions: contact kelley.vanauken@myveryownbook.org



MVOB President Helen Van Auken is a CBS 11 *Texan with Character*

My Very Own Book President Helen Van Auken was featured on June 5, 2009 on the CBS 11 news as a "Texan with Character" for starting MVOB.

Reporter Teresa Frosini did an excellent piece in which she focused on the success

of the reading incentive program Van Auken has been running at Audelia Creek Elementary for the past 3 years, as well as the need to start MVOB to keep it alive (due to district budget shortfalls) and expand it to more schools.

Visit <http://www.myveryownbook/Press.html> to see the video and read the article.

Meet My Very Own Book's Board Members

My Very Own Book Board Members pictured from left to right are President Helen Van Auken, Executive Director Kelley Van Auken, and Director of Community Education Dot Pitts.



Helen Van Auken has been in the field of education for almost 30 years, including 14 years of elementary classroom teaching, one year as a curriculum specialist, 10 years as an elementary school principal and four years as a campus reading specialist. In 2006 she began the Audelia Creek Reading Club, a program that rewards students for minutes read

at home with certificates and new free books. She has just completed her third year running that successful program and is now retired. Helen looks forward to her continued involvement in the education field through her role as President of MVOB.

Kelley Van Auken has managed both staff and volunteers, including approximately 1,000 volunteers at the White House. She has been the Finance Director on multiple campaigns, as well as a fundraising consultant for both political candidates and a Political Action Committee. In this capacity, in addition to raising funds, she has created and maintained databases, kept records for financial filings required by law, and designed and maintained websites. As a Community Representative for a Congresswoman, Kelley gained experience serving low-income populations and processing casework to better the lives of those in the community.

Dot Pitts entered the field of education over 30 years ago. She has experience in both public and private schools, and has taught in most of the elementary grades with a focus in literacy learning. After 12 years in classrooms, with certification as a reading specialist, Dot began teaching the struggling reader and developing curriculum in the area of language arts for a large school district. Since 2005 she has been a literacy consultant for the regional educational service center and an adjunct professor for a local university.

Message from the President

In 2004 I moved from Arizona to Texas and in 2005 I began work as a campus reading specialist at Audelia Creek Elementary. During my first year in that position I had the opportunity to become familiar with our students, parents and the community served by Audelia Creek. I became aware that these wonderful students and parents are very concerned about education, but are often lacking the financial means to obtain the tools needed to extend learning into their homes. I started the Audelia Creek Reading Club, where students are rewarded for minutes read at home with certificates and new, free books. This project provided the motivation to choose to read for pleasure outside of school hours, and gave the children the chance to start their own home libraries.

After 3 years it was apparent that literacy skills were improving and even more important, children were connecting with literature. The students came to know certain authors, series and genre. They started requesting titles and looking forward to the next opportunity to choose and own a book in the series, genre or by the author they had come to love. This is the connection that creates lifelong readers, and our entire reading team was thrilled.

“...literacy skills were improving and even more important, children were connecting with literature.”

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3 Ways You Can Help My Very Own Book

Your generosity and the generosity of others at this important time, less than 2 months before our first program year begins, is critical to our success and will help determine the number of schools we are able to serve. We know that this a tough time for many, but we hope you will read about the various ways that you can help and do whatever you can. While the economy may prevent you from giving as much you may have in the past, please keep in mind that the families of the students we will serve are struggling more than ever and every little bit helps.

Help arrange a book drive at work, religious institution, or favorite book store

A great way for our non-profit to obtain the 1,500 new books per school we need to run our program is for various entities to hold book drives for us. While it may be hard for one person to give a large donation, one or two books from many people is often doable

and just as helpful. If you work for an employer, attend a religious institution, or have a connection to a bookstore that you think might consider holding a book drive, please contact us. We can put together a request for you to pass along to them or we can send one

and reference you as an employee, member, or patron. It is very helpful for someone involved with the entity to be supportive of our request. Once the book drive is approved, we'll do all the work. It is our goal to make the book drive both easy for you and successful!

Purchase books for us or yourself on Amazon using our website link

Do you want to donate books to My Very Own Book, but don't have time to go to the store, are not sure what to buy, and don't want the hassle of shipping them? We have the solution for you! Visit our website at <http://www.myveryownbook.org/>

BookStore.html. On this page we have a "Wish List" of books that are popular with students and you can easily buy them though Amazon.com. Plus, when you buy using the Wish List links on our website, Amazon will make a donation of up to 15% of your total

purchase to our non-profit. Finally, need to buy some books for yourself or a friend? Please consider using the Amazon.com link previously mentioned. Even if you are not buying for us, if you use our link we will still get the same donation from Amazon.

Make a monetary contribution: become a Founding Donor and attend our event

Our first fundraising campaign, which will take place until August 2009, is our "Founding Donor" campaign. Persons who make a monetary or book donation now will be considered a Founding Donor and receive recognition based on their giving level listed on

our website at <http://www.myveryownbook.org/Donate.html>. On this page you can make a donation with a credit card or PayPal, or learn how to send a check. In addition to our Founding Donor campaign, we recently announced our first fundraising

event, which is discussed on page one of this newsletter. Anyone who gives for the fundraiser will also be considered a Founding Donor. We hope you will be able to attend! Learn more or RSVP at <http://www.myveryownbook.org/MovieEvent.html>.



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My Very Own Book will run reading incentive programs in elementary schools in low income neighborhoods in North Texas school districts. The first program year will be the 2009-2010 school year beginning in August of 2009. At the end of each grading period, participating students will be rewarded for minutes read at home with a certificate and a new, free book. This program encourages children to read outside of school hours, furthering educational development and putting new books in the homes of families who often can't afford the luxury of purchasing their own new books.

As a reading specialist, President Helen Van Auken just completed her third year successfully running this reading program in a North Texas elementary school. With the program in jeopardy due to district budget shortfalls, Helen is excited for the non-profit to ensure the program has the funding it needs in the future, while expanding it to other schools. The non-profit has met with Dallas ISD, Richardson ISD and Plano ISD, and hopes to have the resources to run the program in schools in all three school districts.

www.myveryownbook.org

Message from the President cont.

As the economy worsened and funds became scarce, and as my retirement date approached, the idea for our nonprofit, My Very Own Book, was born. My wish was to continue the reading incentive program I had started at Audelia Creek and expand it to all schools where it is needed. With the help of Kelley Van Auken's fund raising, legal and organizational skills, and with the help of a Texas reading guru, Dot Pitts, we began this project with excitement and passion.

I am fortunate to have partners like Kelley and Dot, and am so very thankful to all

the people who have responded with exuberance to My Very Own Book. Please continue to support our vision so that we may extend the program into many more needy neighborhoods.

Thank you, Helen Van Auken

Quarterly Quote

"The things I want to know are in books; my best friend is the man who'll get me a book I ain't read." *Abraham Lincoln*