

Reading: a pillar for life - March 23, 2017

by David Johnson, Milton Times

The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go - Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"

Would you build a house without a foundation? Drive a car with no wheels? Or cut some plywood without a saw?

Maybe some of the characters in a Dr. Seuss book might try to do those things, but it sure wouldn't be easy. We all know projects work best when we have the basics in place to undertake them.

In preparing children for life, it is impossible for parents and teachers to consider every possible curve ball that might come their way.

The best way they can hope for is to provide enough basic preparation so the kids will be able to make their own good decisions and navigate the complex board game of life without too many serious mistakes.

Obviously, a good education is a big step in preparing children for life. And the foundation of a good education is reading.

Two Milton groups, the Foundation for Education, or MFE, and the Early Childhood Alliance, or MECA, have been focused on reading recently. The MFE, which has raised an impressive \$5 million for various school projects since 1996, recently gave a \$20,000 grant to school librarian Lori Henry, who had submitted a proposal called For the Love of Libraries.

The money will pay for 1,124 new books for the four elementary school libraries, with an emphasis on nonfiction material. According to the foundation, the average publication date for material at the Glover and Tucker schools is 1990, and at Collicot-Cunningham the date is 1992.

The educational foundation for 2,105 students at the public elementary students is going to be shored up.

MECA has been promoting reading and related events for young children for years.

Now, it is offering a somewhat different activity. A two-part workshop, *Play with me Dad*, is being held in the evening April 5 and in the morning April 8 at the Discovery Schoolhouse, 101 Blue Hills Parkway. Parents can learn why playing with their child is important for the child's growth and development, academically as well as culturally.

The importance of fathers was in the news recently. As a community project, a greeting card company offered a program in a men's prison. They offered free cards to any inmates wanting to write to their mother for Mother's Day. Every single inmate with a living mother participated.

Volunteers helped with spelling and wording for many inmates, some of whom were virtually illiterate.

The program was such a success, the company decided to try again on Father's Day. The same group of inmates assembled and was asked who wanted to write to their dads. Not one hand went up. Many of the inmates had bad memories of their fathers; others didn't know them at all. Clearly, dads are more than a paycheck to their children.

Many people think reading is not so important for students who are not college bound.

This is ridiculous. Have you ever ordered an auto part from a catalog or online? Tried to understand an architectural blueprint? Read the instructions on a hair product?

Those students in vocational educational programs will do plenty of reading throughout their careers, and often their health and safety may depend on their understanding the material.

Instilling in children a love of reading is one of the most important gifts parents and teachers can bestow.

Three cheers to the MFE and MECA for their work helping parents and teachers build a foundation for tomorrow.