

Celebrating 150 years with \$75,000 grants

Raise-a-Reader funds help boost literacy programs

JOANNE HATHERLY
Times Colonist

An organization devoted to helping students "catch up" on their literacy skills can now do some catching up of its own, thanks to a large grant from the *Times Colonist's* Raise-a-Reader campaign.

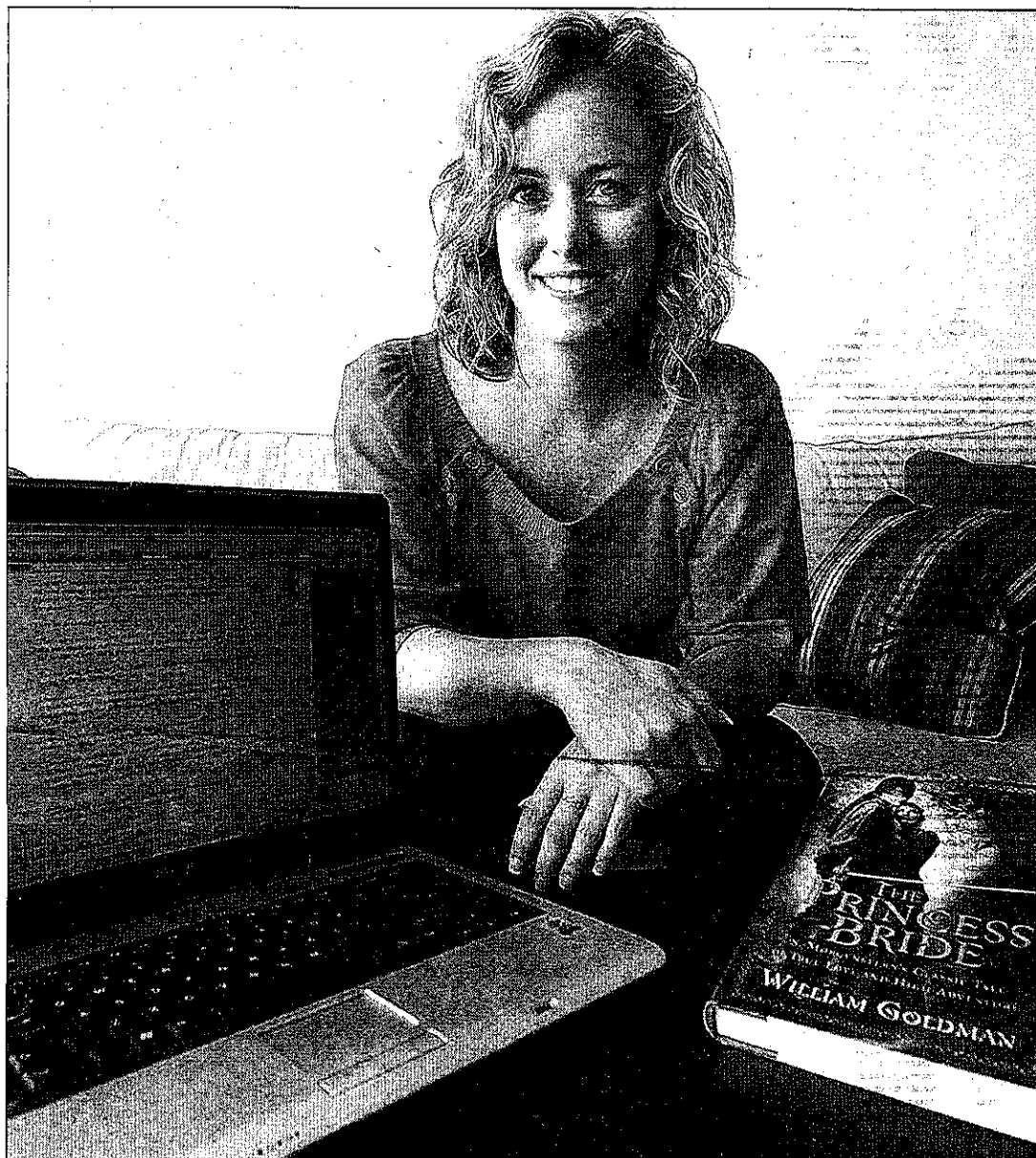
The Westshore Centre of Learning and Training in School District 62 is one of two centres that will receive \$75,000 each — the largest single grants ever handed out from the Raise-a-Reader funds in recognition of the *Times Colonist's* 150th anniversary. The second recipient is the Victoria READ Society.

Devon Stokes-Bennett, who teaches a "catch-up" class for teens aged 15 to 18, said the Westshore centre will use its funds to update its technology by purchasing literacy diagnostic tools, e-book software, audio books and supportive tools, as well as build a "library" of portals through the centre's website.

Stokes-Bennett, who submitted a grant application on behalf of the Westshore Centre, said it was a thrill that her group would receive all the funds it requested. "I didn't know we actually got all that we were asking for. When I realized it, I was completely blown away.

"I completely forgot the amount was for \$75,000," said Stokes-Bennett.

Times Colonist publisher Bob McKenzie credited the province's contribution for helping to make more Raise-a-Reader grants possible. "They matched all our donations dollar for dollar, and so we have extra funds to give back to Vancouver Island in celebration of our 150th year," McKenzie said.



Devon Stokes-Bennett, a literacy teacher at the Westshore Centre of Learning and Training in School District No. 62, says the \$75,000 grant the group received from Raise-a-Reader will help update the technology used in its programs.

The high-school-age students Stokes-Bennett teaches are the ones caught in the automatic "social promotion" system practised by many schools.

"These kids aren't reading the way our parents did, or that we learned to. Their brains are in a different space and we need to go there," said Stokes-Bennett.

The centre has three campuses to serve its diverse clientele, which includes aboriginals aged 15 to 45, young adults aged 18 and up, and students aged 15 to 18.

"They keep getting promoted until they get to Grade 10, where the social promotion practice stops," Stokes-Bennett said. "Suddenly, kids who have been getting by in school by

pretending to read get caught out."

The Westshore Centre's literacy program fills learning gaps that teachers don't have time for inside the regular curriculum.

The Victoria READ Society catches students at an earlier age. Its \$75,000 grant will enable the society to join with School District 61 by staffing



ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST
The Victoria READ Society will use its \$75,000 grant to work with School District 61, providing staff and implementing literacy and numeracy programs, says Claire Rettie, READ's executive director.

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"We are absolutely over the moon since finding out [about the grant]," said Claire Rettie, READ's executive director.

Randy Kaneen, district principal with the school district, said this is the first time the district will partner with an outside group.

"READ has a level of expertise they can provide for families who can't afford remedial services," he said.

Many of the students come from poorer families, and others are from immigrant families. Kaneen noted that children struggling with learning English as a second language have parents who are in the same boat.

Rettie said the grant will benefit as many as 40 students. Teachers will work with only two or three children at a time, a low teacher-to-student ratio that Rettie expects will boost the children's literacy success. jhatherly@tc.canwest.com

Raise-a-Reader grants are going to these groups this year

Dunsmuir Middle School	Winchelsea Elementary	Quamichan Middle School	Learning & Training, School District 62	Ecole Davis Road	Ecole John Stubbs Memorial School	Chemanius Community Schools Association
Colwood Elementary	Kelset Elementary School	Home Learners' Link	Sundance Elementary	Parkland Secondary	Savory Elementary	North Saanich Middle School
Errington Elementary	Happy Valley Elementary	False Bay School	Ecole Margaret Jenkins School	North Oyster Elementary	Ruth King Elementary	George Jay Elementary School
Sunset Elementary	Strawberry Vale School	James Bay Community School	Sooke Elementary School	Lake Cowichan Secondary School	Crystal View Elementary	Selkirk Montessori School
Royal Oak Middle School	Willway Elementary School	Monterey School	Ecole Marigold School	Lambrick Park Secondary	Victoria West Elementary School	Cowichan Valley Open Learning Co-op
George Bonner Middle School	St. Andrew's School	Craigflower School	Sangster Elementary	Colquitz Middle School	Salt Spring Centre School	David Cameron School
School District 70	Shoreline Community Middle School	Victoria High School Library	SIDES Secondary School	Park Avenue Community School	Campbell River Community Literacy Association	
French Creek Community School	Our Place Society	Spencer Middle School	Peninsula Connections for Early Childhood	Lochside Elementary School	Keating Elementary School	
Sir James Douglas School	Saseenos Elementary School	School District 64 + E.C.E Coalition	View Royal Elementary School	Chemanius Secondary School	Brentwood Elementary School	
Cloverdale Traditional School	Comox Valley Community Adult Literacy + Learning Society	Belmont Secondary	Reynolds Secondary School	Ecole Poirier Elementary	Elizabeth Buckley School	
The Rock Solid Foundation	Eagle View Elementary	Esquimalt High School	Hans Helgesen Elementary	South Park Family School	Victoria READ Society	
School District 62, District Resource Centre	Alexander Elementary School	View Royal Reading	Rogers School	Thetis Island Community Library	School District 70 VAST Education Centre	
Edward Milne Community School	Discovery Elementary	Lake Hill Elementary	Discovery Elementary	Tansor Elementary School	L'Ecole Cedar Hill Middle School	
Gordon Head Middle School Library	Oak Bay High School	Fair Start Program/ Mustard Seed	Vancouver Island Regional Library	Cowichan Valley Alternative School	Project Literacy Victoria	
Bench Elementary	Frank Hobbs Elementary	Stelly's Secondary School	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Victoria	Sidney Elementary School	Northridge Elementary	
Journey Middle School	Millstream Elementary	Morning Glory Education Society	Sooke School District	Claremont Secondary	Ecole Macaulay School	
Oaklands Elementary	Campus View Elementary	Sum-sha-thut Lellum	John Muir School	Salt Spring Preschool Society	Central Middle School	
Braefoot School	Tillicum Community School	Koksilah Elementary	L'Ecole Quadra School	Nanose Bay Elementary School	Lansdowne Middle School	
Mount Douglas Secondary School	Maple Bay Elementary	Learning Links	Glanford Middle School	Cordova Bay School	Belmont Park Pre-School Society	
Torquay Elementary	Drinkwater Elementary	Spectrum Community School	Lakewood Elementary School	Doncaster Elementary	Khowhemun Elementary	
Rockheights Middle School	Pembroke School	James Bay Community Project	School District 63 Resource Centre	Willows Elementary	Greater Victoria Public Library	
	Hillcrest Elementary School	Westshore Centre of				
	McKenzie Element					

HOW TO APPLY FOR GRANTS

Organizations can apply for Raise-a-Reader grants by using a form that's available from the *Times Colonist* in the spring. Applications are solicited usually for six weeks beginning in April. A committee of judges selects which organizations to fund. A key issue is whether a project furthers education and literacy in the community, says Kathy Baan, promotions manager for the *Times Colonist*. Contact: kbaan@tc.canwest.com

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