

PHILANTHROPY

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READ Society provides learning programs for low-income kids

School may be out for summer, but the learning continues at the Victoria READ Society where children and youth attend classes and summer camps in reading, writing and mathematics to catch up or get ahead for fall.

This summer, READ has morning and afternoon classes in Victoria and Sidney and also offers learning camps through Panorama Recreation Centre. The week-long camps throughout August will sneak in learning while students explore land, water and sky themes.

"The camps are a great way to bridge learning gaps before school starts, and they are designed to be fun and get kids outside," says Claire Rettie, READ's executive director.

With a focus on creating individual learning plans for each student, READ's professional teachers and low student-teacher ratio help students gain skills and the confidence to move ahead.

"READ has really helped my son, Isaac. It's been great to see him really excelling in math," says his mom, Valerie Campbell.

Today, Isaac is getting top marks in his Grade 10 studies through a distance education program, but he has had to work hard to get where he is today after suffering a brain injury from being hit by a car while riding his bike. "He couldn't function in the regular school system and that's where READ came in," Campbell says.

Though some of Isaac's educational expenses were paid for through a legal settlement, Campbell says the family needed help to continue Isaac's classes at READ. She applied to READ's Education Access program and received tuition support.

Each year, READ offers Education Access to students age six to 18 from low-income households throughout Greater Victoria. As a non-profit, READ fundraises with the local community to support the program, which provides academic assessment and 10 months of classes. Households contribute to their child's tuition according to what they can reasonably afford.

"We could never have done this without the Education Access funding support," says Campbell, who is sometimes exhausted from the medication she continues to take after beating both breast and liver cancer. "I value education and READ has been so kind and generous to us."

The Education Access fund is unique in that young people can get extra atten-

tion to help bridge gaps in learning, regardless of their ability to pay, says Suzanne Velt, chair of READ's board of directors.

"I strongly believe that literacy is essential so that people can grow and contribute to their full potential."

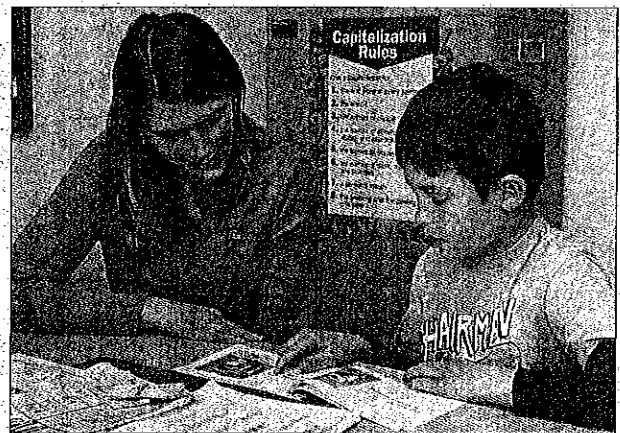
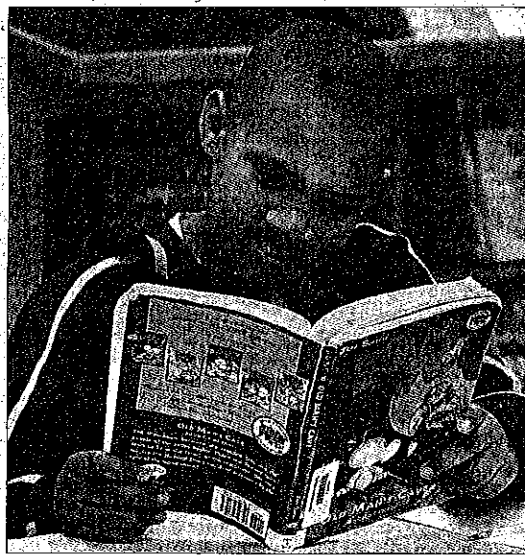
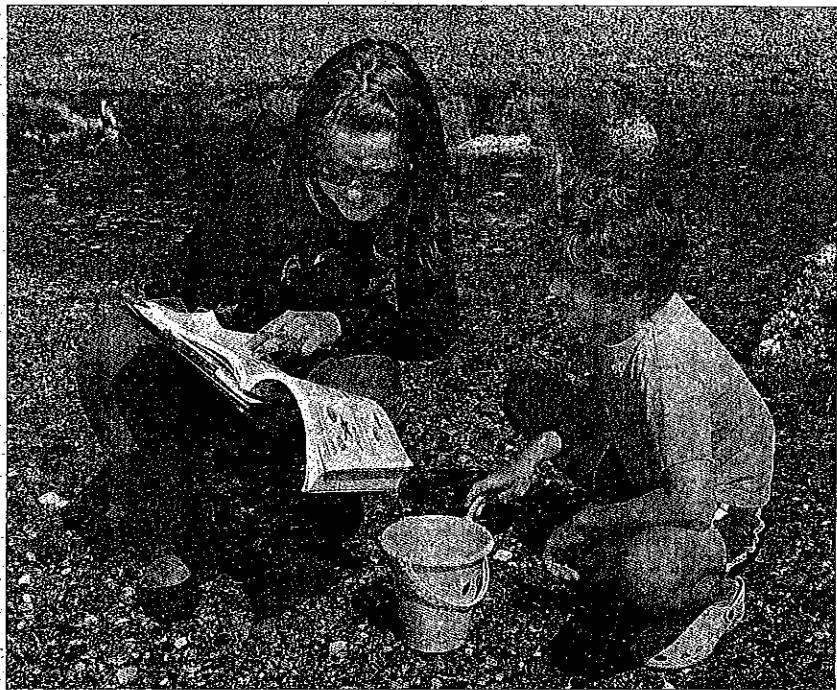
Individualized help makes all the difference for many learners, says Rettie, noting that to provide programs, the organization relies on support from the community.

"Parents who bring their children to READ are contributing directly and indirectly to learning support for low-income households and literacy initiatives across their community."

Members of the community contribute by volunteering, becoming project partners or through financial donations.

READ began offering programs for children in 1976. Today, the organization also operates adult, aboriginal and workplace literacy and learning programs. Find out more at www.readsociety.bc.ca.

Those wishing to support the READ Society can do so by making a donation through the Victoria Foundation, www.victoriafoundation.bc.ca, or by contacting READ directly at 250-388-7225.



The Victoria READ Society has been helping young people improve their reading skills since 1976. Today the non-profit literacy organization offers reading, writing and mathematics instruction as well as adult, aboriginal and workplace literacy and learning programs.