

Reading made 'Rockin'

Cracker Barrel pitches in with Rockin' Reader program for Whitehall Elementary

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Willie Mae Perry reads one of her favorite books to Braundicus Chatman and Madison Fason during Whitehall Elementary School's Rockin' Reader program funded by Cracker Barrel.

Cracker Barrel Old Country Store has made reading more comfortable for Whitehall Elementary students with its Rockin' Reader program.

Whitehall Elementary's library received two double rocking chairs and a wheel barrel bookcase to promote reading among the students.

Last week, the school launched its reading program in which volunteers sign up to read to the children daily in the library.

"Volunteers will sign in and write down how many books they've read and how many children they've read to," said Bonnie Pipkin, Whitehall's instructional coach.

Administrators at the school applied to the Rockin' Reader program, which began in 2004 when North Carolina school counselor Linda Minor sent a letter to Cracker Barrel Old Country Store's corporate office.

Minor told the company how its double rocking chairs played a part in her volunteer reading program.

Cracker Barrel, Minor and a team of educators developed the Rockin' Reader program into a national literacy initiative.

In its first year, Cracker Barrel partnered with more than 120 elementary schools in seven states.

Whitehall Elementary Principal Deborah Montague said she's extremely proud that her school has been awarded the Rockin' Reader program.

Retired teacher Willie Mae Perry volunteered to read to first-graders last week.

She brought along one of her favorite childhood books, "Uncle Jed's Barbershop," which is about an older man who fulfills his dream of one day opening up his own barbershop.

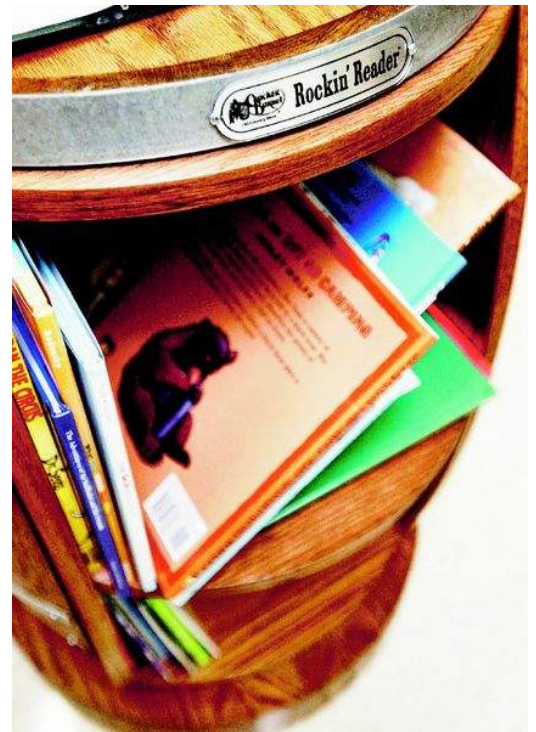
Before reading to the students, Perry talked to them about what they wanted to be when they grew up. Perry and two students fit comfortably in the double-seated rocking chair during the reading time. "Children need to be read to every day," Perry said. "I love reading books and getting children to read."

Perry read to 6-year-old Madison Fason who liked Perry's book, but said her favorite is "Chicka Chicka Boom Boom," which is about the alphabet.

In addition to becoming a Rockin' Reader site, Whitehall Elementary first-grade teacher Denise Pewitte was recipient of "A Day Made Better" award from Office Max.

Pewitte received a large box full of supplies for her classroom.

"It felt like Christmas," said Pewitte, of the award. "I'm so thankful and grateful."



Cracker Barrel gave Whitehall Elementary School rocking chairs and a bookcase as the school takes part in the Rockin' Reader' program.