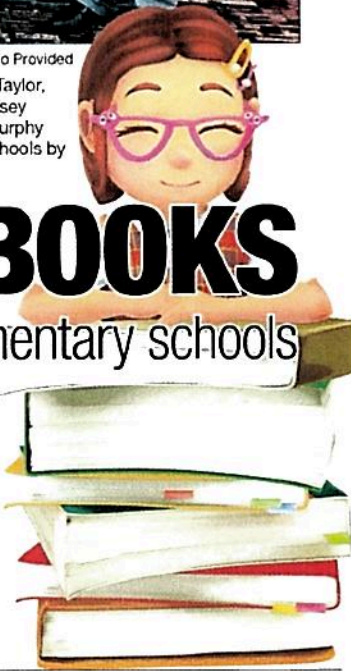




Photo Provided

Steve Sacksteder, United Way board member, United Way CEO and Executive Director Zella Taylor, United Way Administrative and Technology Assistant Elke Guratzch, Lena Dunn Elementary's Lynsey Gress, Kristin McGuire, and principal Jeanette Lobeck, as well as Griffith Elementary's Kristen Murphy and principal Tom Lee show off some of the books recently purchased for students at the two schools by the United Way of Daviess County.



# BRING ON THE BOOKS

## UW grant provides books to local elementary schools

**LINDSAY OWENS**  
TIMES HERALD

Christmas came a little early for students at Helen Griffith and Lena Dunn elementary schools. That's because hundreds of books were recently delivered to the two schools by members of the United Way of Daviess County.

Earlier this year, United Way of Daviess County Executive Director and CEO Zella Taylor said the non-profit applied for a grant through First Book to help supply the schools and students with additional books.

First Book, a non-profit social enterprise that focuses on equal access to quality education for children in need, offered three phases of the OMG Books Awards: Offering More Great Books to Spark Innovation. The local United Way was selected as a recipient from the final phase of the program.

"This grant allowed us to gift book awards for both Lena Dunn and Griffith totaling nearly \$2,000," said Taylor, adding the books for elementary children are just one of several items that benefit youth that have been funded through

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# BOOKS

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the local non-profit this year. Some of those others include offering \$6,000 in scholarships to county high school students, giving \$4,000 to Youth First Camp Memories for those experiencing a loss, and giving \$50,000 towards a new playground at Longfellow Park among others.

"We were happy to be able to provide such needed books to children in the schools," said Taylor.

According to a release from First Book, research shows that just the presence of books in the home improves education outcomes, yet low income communities across the U.S.

are plagued by book deserts. "The profound depth of need in each and every proposal was truly heart-breaking, but the innovation and dedication displayed in each application gave us an equally profound sense of hope," said Kyle Zimmer, president, CEO and co-founder of First Book. "A child's potential is compromised by the absence of resources, but there are educators working to put good books in the right places. Inspiring a lifelong love of reading is essential and that means creating regular access to books that kids want to read. That's what First Book does and what the OMG Books Award Program aims to amplify. We spark the innovation that breaks down barriers to education."

Griffith Elementary Principal Tom Lee and Kristen Murphy said thanks to the grant over 200 books will be added to the school's library as well classroom libraries — something that is costly endeavor.

"Helen Griffith is beyond excited to receive the First Book/OMG Book Grant through United Way of Davies County. Students will be elated that new high interest books will be at their fingertips for their reading pleasure," said Lee. "Each student in our building will be able to access these books to further their love of reading. Not only will students use these books, but several of the books will allow teachers to model reading and writing skills with these wonderful

mentor texts. These learning experiences will be enriched with the help of United Way."

Kristen McGuire at Lena Dunn said the school is grateful to the United Way for supporting efforts to ensure that every student at the school is able to receive a brand new book by the end of the year.

"We have numerous events throughout the school year where students take home used books to keep. Seeing students light up when they get to pick out their own brand new book, never gets old. It is so important to get as many books into the homes of our students as possible and this grant is an amazing opportunity to not only fill the home libraries, but to fill them with bright, brand new books," said McGuire.