



Savannah - Chatham County
Local. Outreach. Volunteer. Educators.

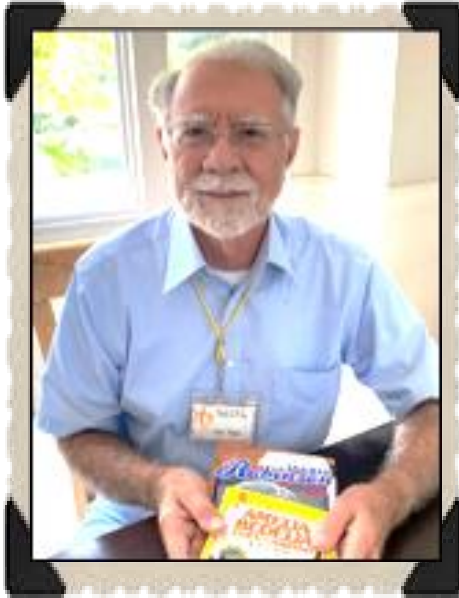
L.O.V.E.
M E N T O R S

Helping
Children
Learn

www.lovementors.org

October, 2024

Message From The Leadership Team



By: Roy Samras
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Greetings to our LOVE Mentor family,

We welcome our mentors back to the school year and meeting again with your friends in the elementary schools. The Leadership team has been very busy over the summer and especially in September, with a primary focus on recruiting. Linny Dillard and Audrey Sites have displayed heroic effort in organizing and implementing this recruiting drive.

As of this writing, about 15 new mentors have “signed-up” with more expected before we get started in the schools. We have been very fortunate to have a number of people become more active in the operations of LOVE Mentors.

Audrey Sites and Daniella Chiofalo have helped immensely with recruiting, publicity and some of the secretarial and administrative functions. They bring very useful computer skills which are put to good use in this day and age. Jill Corbin has been very helpful in researching and placing the fall book order in the absence of Ginny Pierce. Ron Dillard brings a wealth of corporate experience from the field of finance and management will be transitioning into the treasurer’s position in the near future.



We are very sad to see Ginny Pierce leave our Leadership Team. She and Lee will be moving to the Charleston area later in the fall. Ginny has been our longest serving mentor and has been very active in LOVE Mentors almost from the very beginning. She has held a number of leadership positions, including Chair of the Board, Site Director, and Director of Mentor Resources. We are losing a wealth of information and a tireless worker, benefiting many generations of our students and our mentors.

We have had some exciting developments in our quest to form a closer relationship with the SCCPSS District Office. The latest agreement is to offer special training for our mentors in the new literacy curriculum adopted by the District. For additional background and details on this initiative, please see a more in-depth article on this topic later in this newsletter.

I wish you all a very productive school year. And remember, all mentors should take well-deserved pride in what you are doing to improve the lives of the young children of Savannah.

Roy

Thursday, October 24, 2024
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.



Skidaway Island Methodist Church, Bailey Hall

Don't miss a chance to

pick up free books to share with your students.

And attend the SCCPSS literacy curriculum training if you missed the earlier training session.

L.O.V.E. Mentors Book Program

One of the most important things L.O.V.E. does is to provide books to our students. Twice a year we have a Book Fair where mentors can come and select free books for their students. There is a wide range of books from early reader picture books to chapter books, and some recommended by the new literacy curriculum being introduced by SCCPSS.

During your mentoring session you will read the book with your student. When they have successfully read it with you, you can give the book to the child to take home.

For many students there are few or no books at home so this is a special treat.

Let them put the Book Plate in the front of the book and write their name on it.

Encourage them to read it at home and read to younger brothers or sisters and other family members.



I love to read

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

My L.O.V.E. mentor gave it to me





Do you ever wonder what to say when people ask you “What does L.O.V.E. do?”

Here’s the answer...

L.O.V.E. Mentors

Over 25 years the Local Outreach Volunteer Educators (L.O.V.E.) have been helping the children of Chatham County improve their learning skills by providing one on one mentoring to those in most need.

Over 100+ L.O.V.E. Mentors volunteer at the following Title One Schools

- ❖ GADSDEN
- ❖ HAVEN
- ❖ HODGE
- ❖ ISLE OF HOPE
- ❖ LOW
- ❖ PULASKI
- ❖ WILLIAMS
- ❖ WINDSOR FOREST

L.O.V.E. mentors support the personal learning growth of each child through persistence and being present- three keys that are unconditional.

- ❖ One on One Mentoring
- ❖ Book Program
- ❖ Summer Camp program

Mentoring targets grades K-3 with emphasis on reading, utilizing phonics and the Read Naturally set of practice readers.

The book program grows out of emphasis on improving reading skills with over 600 books distributed to our mentees each year.

Each child receives 3-5 books that they have mastered reading as their own.

Summer camp program is for the entire summer and is offered for student and siblings at no cost to their parents or caretakers.

The success of L.O.V.E. is the result of the CONSISTENT support the mentors provide. Schools know they can count on their L.O.V.E. Mentors to be there when they need them. It takes so little time to make a difference in a child’s life.



Summer Camp News

By: Carol Black



We encouraged all our students to apply, and many took advantage of this opportunity.

Our partner camps, the **Frank Callen Boys and Girls Club** and **West Broad Street YMCA** offer full-day programs throughout the summer, ensuring a fun, safe, and enriching experience for the students.

Both camps provide lunch, with the West Broad YMCA also offering breakfast and dinner. In addition to the scholarships, L.O.V.E. contributed funds to enhance the camps educational enrichment activities.

This summer, L.O.V.E. awarded scholarships to 50 students, including both our mentees and their siblings, to attend summer camp.

MENTORS ARE MANDATORY REPORTERS

All mentors must comply with the Mandatory Reporting requirements for suspected child abuse. This is covered in detail in the video for VISTA, the volunteer tracking program. The link to the video is at the following website: <https://vimeo.com/808444863/927d334c5c?share=copy>. If a child says something or if you see some physical evidence that suggests the child might be in trouble, the mentor must report this to the principal or counselor. Do not ask the child any further questions about the situation, just tell them this is information you will report to the appropriate person. The professional staff will handle it from there. Do not, under any circumstances, try to intervene.



HOLIDAYS ARE COMING UP

October 11 and 14—no school, Fall break

November 5—half day, e-learning

November 25-29—Thanksgiving break

December 23-January 3—Winter break



New Curriculum in SCCPSS for Improving Literacy in the Elementary Schools and the Training of Our Mentors

By Roy Samras

Disclaimer and background: I am, by no means, an authority on the topics in this article. However, I would like to convey what I have learned over the past year through meetings and other communications with various District staff members on these matters. I consider this material to be very important as we seek to improve the reading skills of our young students that we mentor. I want L.O.V.E. to support as best we can the initiative that the School District Office has taken, spearheaded by the Superintendent, Dr. Watts, to improve the literacy rates in our schools. The following people have contributed to this “reporting:” Kurt Hetager, Chief Public Affairs and Administrative Services Officer, Stacy Jennings, Executive Director of Communications, Cherie Goldman, Literacy Effectiveness Officer and Shraddha Nunziata, Senior Director of Initiatives and Special Projects. These are all District staff members of SCCPSS.

As you may know, a drop in literacy scores as a result of the COVID pandemic has been seen nationwide. Addressing this drop in the literacy scores of the Savannah Chatham County Public School System has become a very high priority for the District Office and has led to adopting a new curriculum for teaching reading based on a large body of research in brain development and cognitive science spanning many years. This body of knowledge is collectively known as “The Science of Reading.” The Science of Reading seeks to understand how the brain develops the skill and proficiency for reading and writing, why some students struggle to read, and create effective ways to assess, teach and intervene to improve these skills.

The new curriculum for K-5 is known as Into Reading. An important supplemental resource used with Into Reading is a set of classroom books known as Just Right Readers. These readers are classified as “decodable” books which contain words that follow specific phonics patterns, allowing the young reader to sound-out words. Used as a series, these books introduce phonics skills in a sequential, developmentally appropriate, and cumulative manner. In contrast to this, used commonly in the past, are the “predictable” books which use repetitive patterns and familiar sequences of letters to encourage the student to anticipate or guess words and meaning from pictures and context.

The District has stocked all school libraries with a set of Just Right Readers that we are encouraged to use during our mentoring sessions (but not give away). Also, Jill Corbin has just completed our fall book order with an emphasis on decodable books and has ordered some from the Just Right Readers collection.

The upper management of the School District puts strong emphasis on training volunteer groups that take students away from classroom instruction. L.O.V.E. Mentors is fortunate to be identified as a group that the District has offered to provide special training to familiarize the mentors with the new curriculum.

The first training session was cancelled as the church (along with most of Skidaway Island) was without power as of September 30. The first session will be rescheduled. The second training is tentatively scheduled immediately following our Book Fair on October 24, also in Bailey Hall. It is not necessary to attend both of these sessions. This training will be conducted by education scholars from Georgia Southern University, College of Education. The District has been working very closely with the CoE to develop effective training programs on the background, scientific basis and instruction techniques used with this new curriculum. This will be interactive training with practical tips for incorporating research-backed literacy practices into our mentoring sessions.

I want to clarify that our mentors are not to be considered “teachers” or a surrogate for the classroom teacher, and the training will not dictate how mentors conduct their sessions. The District simply wants to maximize our effectiveness when working with the students (and removing them from the classroom) by introducing mentors to concepts and practices the child experiences in the classroom.

I always like to emphasize our “mentoring” role and the importance of establishing a close bond and friendship with our children facilitated by the one-on-one mentoring model. This is an ideal way to gain the respect of the children and focus on improving reading (and other) skills, especially for the most vulnerable readers.

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New Curriculum

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I hope this brief description will give you a useful introduction to this new approach to teaching reading and some of the supporting reading books. I strongly encourage each of our mentors to attend a training session, which will be offered periodically to accommodate busy schedules. Come prepared with questions and expect stimulating discussions with experts in this new approach to reading education.



L.O.V.E. believes that improving a child's education is the foundation for improving quality of life. Classroom teachers have little opportunity to work one-on-one with students. L.O.V.E. provides this benefit to students.

L.O.V.E. Leadership Team For 2024 - 2025

Chair of the Board of Trustees	Roy Samras, Officer
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees	Open
Director of Operations	Bill Monroe, Officer
Mentor Recruiting and Assimilation	Linny Dillard
Secretary	Trish Potts, Officer
Assistant Secretary	Audrey Sites
Treasurer	Kevin Dutton, Officer
Mentor Resources and Training	Open
Publicity and Events.....	Daniella Chiofalo
Newsletter	Carol Fallon
Camp Coordinator	Carol Black
Training Specialist	Catherine Ruhl
Technical/Web Support.....	Samantha Lambert & Daniel Chiofalo
Chair Emeritus	Laura Wehrle
Publication Design	Dr. M. Louise Walters, The Leadership Center

Schools

At the current time, L.O.V.E. Mentors serves 8 Title I schools in the SCCPSS.

SCHOOLS	L.O.V.E. SITE DIRECTOR
Andrea B. Williams	Carol Fallon and Tom Rood
Gadsden	Linny Dillard
Haven	Kevin Dutton
Hodge	Bill Monroe
Isle of Hope	Betsey Hines
Low	Ruth Price
Pulaski	Ginny Donaldson and Jill Corbin
Windsor Forest	Sue Burns



**Thank You For
Helping Children Learn**

