# BJC Book Brigade sends kids home with books



Rick Stevens, Christian Hospital president, visited Jury Elementary School in the Hazelwood School District near the end of the school year to read to second graders and distribute books.

When second-graders in public school districts served by BJC HealthCare pack up their desks at the end of the school year, they had a brand-new book to take home to encourage their summer reading.

In its fourth year, the BJC Book Brigade provides more than 26,000 books to rising third-graders in over 300 public and charter schools in 63 districts throughout the communities served by BJC hospitals including St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Columbia, Sullivan and Farmington in Missouri; and Alton, Belleville and Shiloh, Ill. The program is a BJC community outreach effort in recognition of the correlation between education and higher income, better health and longer life expectancy.

As part of the program, Rick Stevens, Christian Hospital president, visited Jury Elementary School in the Hazelwood School District on May 6 to read to area second graders and distribute books. The opportunity to spend time with the young students is a bright spot in his day. "It's very rewarding to spend time with these students and give them an educational boost during a pivotal point in their reading education," said Stevens. "We know the importance reading plays in helping secure a child's future and to experience firsthand their enthusiasm for the BJC Book Brigade program was very impressive." Book titles are selected by curriculum specialists based on age-appropriate content and storyline messages. Employees have the opportunity to donate books online through Scholastic Books, and BJC supplies the remainder. Books are packaged and delivered in partnership with Valley Industries sheltered workshop in St. Louis. "While it may seem like a modest effort to us, many of the children who received a book last year wrote touching notes to express thanks for a brand-new book of their own," Stevens said. "In the journey toward higher education and better health, the BJC Book Brigade is one small step that will take a very long time. But, we believe it's well worth the long-term effort toward improved reading, high school graduation rates and, ultimately, better health for the future."

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# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Students learn farm-to-table lessons thanks to Seeds of Hope Farm



Larimore Elementary students learning at Seeds of Hope Farm on June 25

Photo courtesy Ferguson-Florissant School District

Students at Larimore Elementary School are learning about the science behind what they eat and how it can help a community.

More than 20 fourth-grade students are spending part of their summer school coursework learning about the farm-to-table process from volunteers at the Seeds of Hope Farm in Spanish Lake.

Seeds of Hope Farm helps increase access to affordable, fresh produce through community-supported agriculture, along with supporting community garden groups and providing education.

The hands-on science lessons include measuring plants and understanding how they grow and learning about soil types and what supports growth.

Many of the volunteers are UMSL students who provide the lesson plans and lead the hands-on demonstrations.

Students help plant a variety of vegetables including onions, tomatoes, carrots, and kale, and will help harvest the crops later in the summer.

As part of their last day of summer school, students and Seeds of Hope volunteers will use part of the harvest to prepare a meal for the class to enjoy, while the rest is provided to the community.

Seeds of Hope Farm is a project of the non-profit Community Action Agency of St. Louis County.

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