Reading advocates launch Kansas' summer book program
Statewide project aims to improve literacy skills of children

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By Tim Carpenter
timothy.carpenter@cjonline.com

Gov. Sam Brownback and reading advocates converged Tuesday to urge Kansas children to participate in a summer program aimed at broadening literacy skills by devoting more recreational time to books.

Forty kids participated in story time with the governor at the Kansas State Library in Topeka during launch of the third annual Read Kansas Read project.

"Students work hard to improve their literacy skills during the school year," Brownback said. "Without that structured classroom environment during the summer, however, many students don't spend enough time reading consistently to maintain their skills."

He said Read Kansas Read would work to fill that learning gap during summer months.

The initiative is a collaborative effort by the Kansas State Library system and Kansas State Department of Education. It ties into the Kansas Book Festival, with recognition in September at the festival of top summer program readers in each age division from among seven library regions.

Jo Budler, the state librarian, said Kansas' library network would be involved in encouraging local libraries to participate in the summer reading program.

"In 2013, Kansas libraries had more than 97,000 children and teens participate in summer reading programs, and I hope that we have even more visit their library and make reading a priority this year," Budler said.

Children interested in the summer program can sign up at a local library or download a book-tracking form at www.ReadKansasRead.ks.gov. Reading logs are due Aug. 11.

All participating libraries will be entered to receive by random drawing a $500 grant from the Kansas Book Festival.

First lady Mary Brownback plans to recognize the state's top regional readers by age group at an awards ceremony at the Kansas Book Festival. The festival's goal is to spark interest in lifelong reading by Kansans, and that objective is supported by a summer reading program directed at children, she said.

"Learning doesn't end when school recesses for the summer, and Kansas libraries play an important role in this program," Mary Brownback said.

Tim Carpenter can be reached at (785) 295-1158 or timothy.carpenter@cjonline.com.
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