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Valley team kicks off reading initiative

By Patricia Villers Register Staff

ANSONIA — Want to improve a child's life in five minutes? Read a book to them.

It's as simple as that, according to the Read Across America initiative.

Valley educators and elected officials kicked off the local Read Across America effort Thursday at a breakfast meeting at John J. Sullivan's restaurant. After the meeting, the adults fanned out in the area and read to children. They'll do so again today.

The National Education Association sponsors the 13th annual Read Across America on or around March 2, the birth date of the late children's author Dr. Seuss.

The initiative promotes reading and seeks to instill a lifelong love of reading in children.

Thursday's breakfast was sponsored by the Early Childhood Task Force of the Valley Council for Health and Human Services, with support from the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance.

Seymour Discovery Coordinator Carla Sullivan organized the event and thanked all of the readers.

She talked about the importance of reading to children, and read excerpts from one of her children's favorites from Dr. Seuss, "Are You My Mother?" to set the mood.

Pamela Lorenzo, chair of the Early Childhood Task Force, said it's important "to invest in our children, and one of the best ways is to give of ourselves, and that is what you are doing today."

She said that "motivating children to read is an important factor in student achievement."

The Early Childhood Task Force is planning its annual play and learn fair in April, one of the events it holds throughout the year in the Valley to support parents, Lorenzo said.

Valley Community Foundation President James Cohen, who was scheduled to read to preschoolers at Julia Day Nursery in Ansonia, recalled growing up visiting Derby Public Library.

"It was a like a wonderland to go into that building," he said. "We don't know how lucky we are to have access to books. The work we do to bring reading materials (to those who need them) is important."

Mayor Anthony Staffieri said he has "more fun than the children" when he visits classrooms and reads to students.

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Melanie Stengel/Register James Cohen, president of the Valley Community Foundation, reads to the children at the Julia Day Nursery Ansonia.