

# Celebrate Reading



*Families join together at PHES to 'foster a lifetime love of reading and learning'*

By Jason L. Austin  
HERALD POST STAFF

Many costumed and a few plain-clothed children came to Patrick Henry Elementary School March 4 to celebrate reading and to have some fun painting, crawling, fishing and eating – green eggs and ham were on the menu.

The evening brought out several cats in hats, a little Cindy Lou Who and a few star-bellied Sneetches to round out the bunch.

The goal, according to the event organizer Jenny L'Esperance, was to "foster a lifetime love of reading and learning."

Not to mention it was nice for the teachers to do something outside the classroom with all the kids, she said.

After two months of planning and three weeks of coming in early and staying late to decorate and prepare, L'Esperance, who teaches a multi-age class, said for the kids to see the excitement of parents and peers, it was worth it.

The evening had several guest readers, to include U.S. Army Garrison Commander Robert L. White, USAG Baden-Württemberg Command Sgt. Maj. Yolanda Lomax, and a singing cowboy, Dan L'Esperance, Jenny's husband and a teacher at Mark Twain Elementary School.

There were two book walks, like a cake walk, but with books instead of cake, several bookmark-making tables, a hat making table, and a game of Cats vs. Hats tic-tac-toe game.

Roaming the halls was the Cat in the Hat himself passing out books and posing for photos.

In the library, children played Cat in the Hat Jeopardy and other trivia games.

One room featured the information on the Read to Feed program, which the school is looking into



Photos by Jason L. Austin

Kerigan Parker, a kindergartner at Patrick Henry Elementary School, crawls through a "Star-on" machine in the Sneetches hallway before paying for her very own belly star during a celebration of reading event held March 4 at her school. (above) U.S. Army Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Yolanda Lomax 'moos' during her reading of "Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?" to a group of children during PHES's reading celebration.

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The Read to Feed program is a Heifer International fundraiser, where students seek sponsorship for book reading, and the funds raised go to purchasing livestock for poor families to produce food stuffs, like eggs and milk.

For Russ Claus, PHES principal, the event was an opportunity to bring members of the community into the school to emphasize to the children the importance of reading and learning while having fun.

Having fun is why Nicolas Marzolino, 7, was there decked out in his Cat in the Hat outfit, who said his favorite Dr. Seuss book was a big book with lots of stories from the library. He said he enjoyed playing games, and was looking forward to going down the Sneetches hallway – they are his favorite character, his mom said.

## Reading for glee on PHV

Through the children's costumes no one, "knew whether this one was that one or that one was this one or which one was what one... or what one was who."

And so went the evening of cats in their hat, teachers and parents, singing cowboys and Sneetches, Cindy Lou Who, and all that.

The evening was fun for children young and old, with painting and hat making and waffled hearts baking, it was for celebrating reading Dr. Claus was told.

He's the top man at the school for people who are small in our little village named after Patrick Henry. Among the small people Claus is a giant – well he's quite tall.

The evening unfolded on March 4 in the halls says Jenny L'Esperance, after two months of planning it was fun for the teachers to decorate the walls.

She called herself the gatherer, organizer of fun, to celebrate reading, and make hearts speeding. Who is to blame? Claus says she's the one.

The teachers all stayed late night after night, they stayed, and some came early some students helped too, to make it just right.

The intent was quite purposeful for teachers and staff – to make reading fun. no longer a chore – more meaningful

For students to grow through a lifetime of love of reading and learning. We're mostly finished with this rhyme.

In the end it came down to love of Sneetches and Lorax. Nicholas Marzolino in his Cat in the Hat costume, went for stared Sneetches and an allusive balloon, avoiding the reading by the sergeant major named Lomax.

-Jason L. Austin