

# Common knowledge

## Volunteers read to Grapeland Elementary students

By Wendy Leung Staff Writer

A reading program geared for Grapeland Elementary's youngest students in Rancho Cucamonga tends to excite the adults more than anyone else.

"It's one of the first things I check on the calendar," said Robbie Broedow, a district representative for Sen. Bob Dutton, R-Rancho Cucamonga.

Broedow was speaking of Reading Buddies, a San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools program bringing members of the community into the classrooms for storytime.

At Grapeland every month, a group of 20 volunteers, all members of the Rancho Cucamonga Chamber of Commerce, gather to read to kindergarten to second-grade students.

"It's a fantastic program," said Grapeland Principal Jeff Sipos. "The kids just love it."

Ella Au, 8, is no stranger to books. She's a fan of the Biane Library, her teacher reads to her and she reads to her younger siblings.

But there's something special about a visitor coming to the classroom with a stack of books in their arms.

Ella, a loquacious second-grader, said the books are always funny and full of adventures.

"They make your imagination go wild," she said.

Her classmate, Ford Melillo, 7, agreed. Stories have a tendency to take you away from the classroom.

"They make you feel like you're doing that thing," he said.

But it's the adults who are the ones giddy about taking an hour off from work to spend time with the little ones.

They're a diverse group. Glen Newman of Brandman University is the quintessential grandfather. At a reading last week, Newman read about a couple of hibernating bears who set their alarms early to be awake for Valentine's Day.

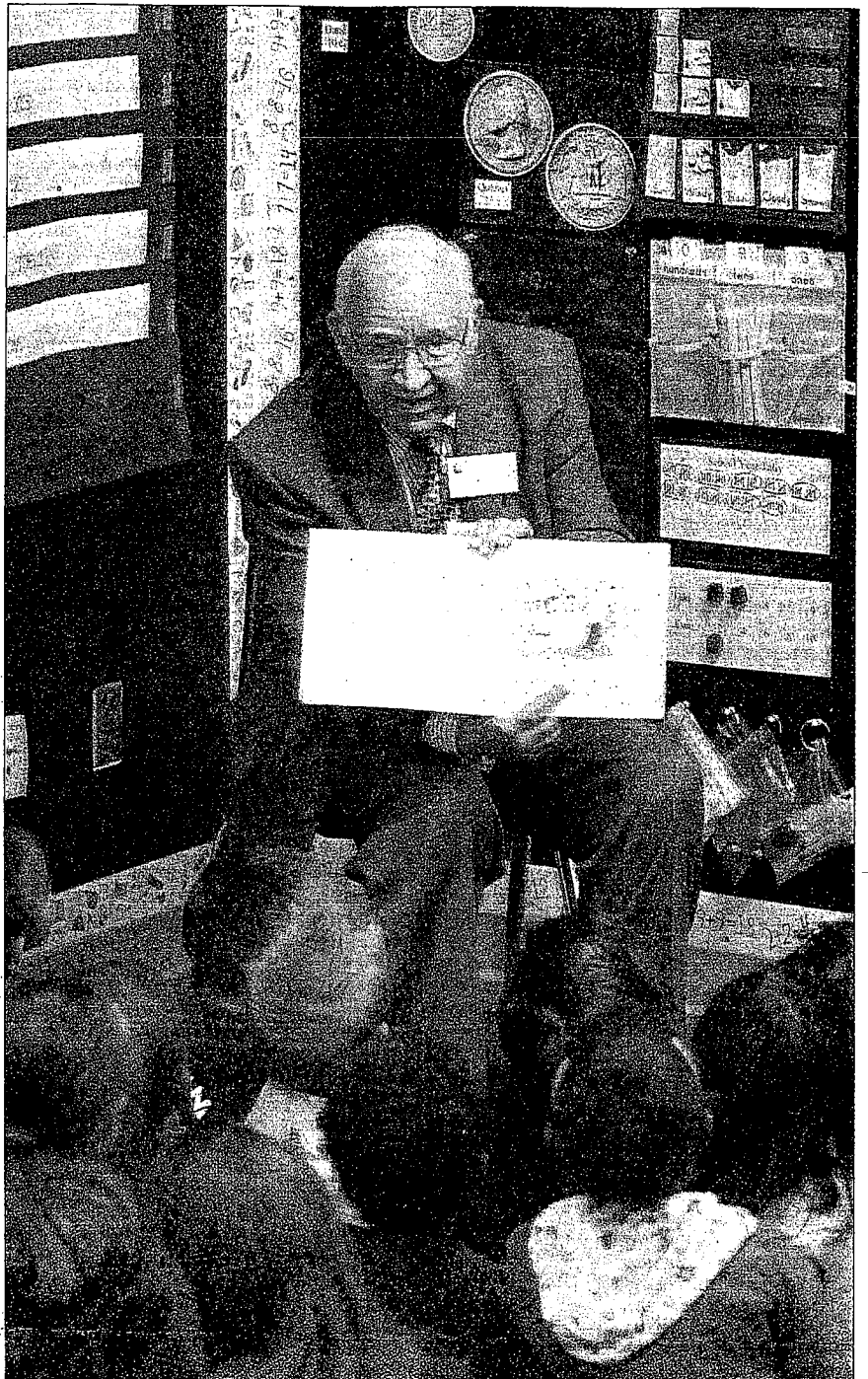
Neil Beisel of Leadership Martial Arts is the energetic one. He follows every story with a martial arts tip. The last reading session got a group of students mastering a side kick.

With monthly visits, the students have grown accustomed to their readers. Broedow says she's even recognized at the supermarket.

"I'll hear a little voice say, 'Miss Robbie,' and I see this little one grabbing my leg," Broedow said about a recent trip to the market.

Principal Sipos said it's hard to measure the value of the Reading Buddies program; he knows it's invaluable.

"When the school opens up its doors to the community, you open the floodgate of



LaFonzo Carter/Staff Photographer

Glen Newman, assistant professor of education at Brandman University, reads books to students on Jan. 21, during Reading Buddies program at Grapeland Elementary School in Rancho Cucamonga.

resources," Sipos said.

It may be trite to say it takes a village to raise a child but Sipos is a firm believer that a well-rounded education means more than just benchmarks and test scores.

"It takes more than teachers," he said. "It takes parents, staff, aunts, uncles. It takes the entire community."