

Call for children's books

The Book Festival of the Marcus Jewish Community Center Atlanta (MJCCA) is putting out a call to give the gift of reading to children.

Each year, the book festival coordinates Project GIVE. Last year, during the 2014 festival, patrons and visitors donated more than 1,000 new and gently used children's books. The donation went to students in kindergarten through third grade in metro Atlanta Title 1 elementary schools. Festivalgoers are being asked to again donate children's books during this year's event that is currently underway and runs through Nov. 22.

"The partnership with the AJCL [Atlanta Jewish Coalition for Literacy] was so successful last year, that the MJCCA is thrilled to work with them again," said **Ellen Chalef**, Project GIVE Committee chairwoman. "The AJCL strives to promote literacy, one child at a time. Their mission is a perfect fit for our book festival."

The AJCL trains and recruits volunteer reading tutors who work with students K-3rd grades in metro Atlanta Title 1 elementary schools. It strives to enhance the reading skills, attitude and life prospects of children who need assistance.

"We are so appreciative to the members of the community who have participated in this special community action project in the past," Chalef said.

"These tutors, as well as the books, are making such a difference in the lives of these students," continued Chalef. "Not only are they receiving the present of a book, but they are gaining the gift of being able to read it, independently."

Chalef said the donated books are placed in inventory in a Sandy Springs warehouse where tutors go, select books they think their students will be interested and then incorporate those books into tutoring sessions. Once the student has completed the book and mastered the tutoring goals, they are given the book to keep.

"It's not just a book. It's teaching them to love reading, love learning," said Chalef, who tutors at Lake Forest Elementary School in Atlanta. She said she recently gave her student a second book and the 8-year-old girl was beaming. "I still have the other book you gave me," she said the girl told her and shared that she was reading the book to her baby sister.

Chalef said many students in the Title 1 schools don't have the luxury of having an abundance of books at home.

"You are making a difference in their life, not just their school," she said, adding that the books also are exposing students to a world they don't know."

While the two-week festival that features 40 authors wraps up Nov. 22, books will be collected through Nov. 30. Bins are located at the MJCCA's front desk, 5342 Tilly Mill Road, Dunwoody. For more information, contact projectgive@atlantajcc.org or (678) 812-3984.



Ellen Chalef, chairwoman of the Marcus Jewish Community Center Atlanta's Project GIVE, with books donated for the project.

