

St. John Bosco students delighted with \$70,000 literacy grant

By DANETTE DOOLEY
SPECIAL TO THE TELEGRAM

Students at St. John Bosco did a happy dance recently when they found out their school had been awarded a \$70,000 literacy grant.

"When our teachers told us that we got it, we all started screaming and jumping for joy and my friend Daniel shouted out, 'Yeah!'" laughs 10-year-old Brittany Benson.

An initiative of the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation, the grant covers a three-year period.

The Shea Heights school is one of 20 schools and the only one in this province to receive funding at this time.

It's also the first time a school under the Eastern School District has been successful in applying for the grant, says St. John Bosco principal Sarah Osmond.

The students weren't the only ones elated with the news, Osmond says.

She compares waiting for a call from Indigo representatives to let them know if their school was among the successful applicants to waiting to hear if you'd won the lottery.

"You know this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It will never come your way again," Osmond says.

The funding is a great way to celebrate the school's 75th anniversary, she says.

The age of the K-9 school explains why many of the books are older than the students.

"Lots of the books are even older than my mother," says 10-year-old Paul Coady.

Indigo operates in all provinces under different banners, including Chapters and Coles.

The Love of Reading Foundation grants \$1.5 million each year to selected elementary schools in Canada.

Now in its fifth year, the foundation has contributed \$7.5 million towards literacy initiatives.

One of the most exciting parts of the project, Osmond says, will be taking all 230 students to Chapters, where each will purchase a library book.

"We'll take two grade levels at a time and when they come back with their book we'll have labels put on them saying handpicked by (child's name)."

Diane Chafe is a learning resource teacher at St. John Bosco.

Enhancing literacy is in keeping with the school's development plans, Chafe says.

"I'm very excited that we're able to supply our students with so many wonderful books and have them choose many of them themselves," Chafe says.

Eight-year-old Emily Scott says her favourite books are Ramona books.

The popular children's series is written by Beverly Cleary.

"Ramona's a little girl and she gets into a lot of silly situations. In one book she fills the bathtub with toothpaste," Emily giggles.

Paul Coady says he's a big fan of Robert Munsch books.

"His book was one of the first I learned to read. My pop helped me read it," he says.

Nine-year-old Breanna Earle

smiles when she's asked if she's familiar with any Newfoundland authors.

"The House of Wooden Santas," she says, closing her eyes to think about the author's name. "Kevin Major," she says, with a little prompting.

In striving to improve student literacy, St. John Bosco participates in Transcontinental's Newspaper in Education (NIE) project.

The initiative sees The Telegram delivered to classrooms each day.

"Our junior high students like to

read current events and get into discussions about what they've read," Osmond says. "There have been a number of articles in the paper about Shea Heights recently, so that personal type story is always of interest to the students," she adds.

Former school principal Dave Locke is the Telegram's NIE co-ordinator.

"This is like mother's milk to these children," Locke says of the literacy grant.

"If you can't read, you're at a terrible disadvantage."

The earlier a child is exposed to reading, the quicker they'll learn how important it is to pick up a book, Locke says. Enhancing literacy skills also leads to improvements in other



areas, he adds.

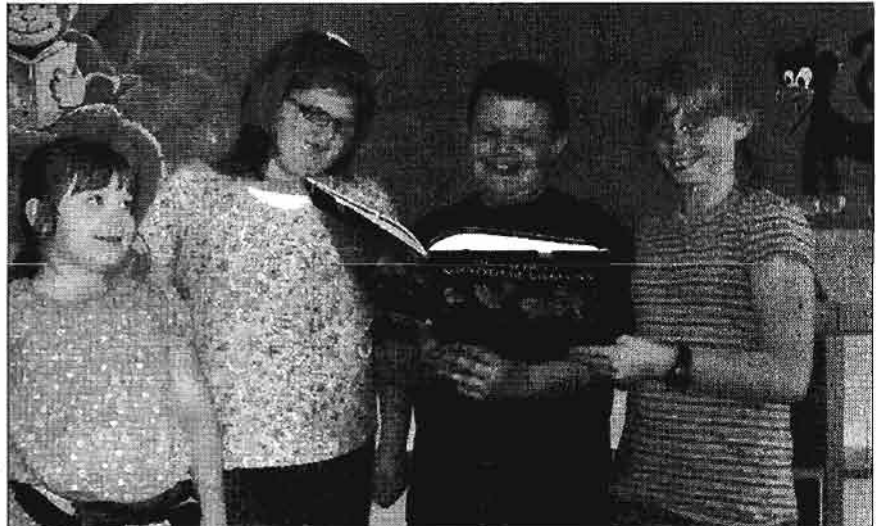
Thanks to support from the St. John's Rotary Club, St. John Bosco has new bookcases soon to be filled with titles purchased through the grant and with books donated through the Rotary Club of St. John's Northwest read-along program.

Emily says many of the old books in her school are torn and dusty.

"But when we get our new books we're going to put them in the bookshelves the right way and not just squeeze them in to tear up all the covers," Breanna says.

"That's right," Brittany adds. "We're going to respect them and take care of them and love them."

danette@nl.rogers.com



The bookcases behind these students will soon be filled with new books, many of which will be purchased through a \$70,000 literacy grant from the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation. From left are: Emily Scott, Breanna Earle, Paul Coady and Brittany Benson.

— Photo by Danette Dooley/The Telegram