

Books and Badges Helps Boost Literacy

Wednesday, 15 July 2023

Thomas Bender - Sarasota Herald-Tribune USA TODAY NETWORK

The Sarasota Housing Authority, in partnership with the Sarasota Police Department, the Book Rich Environments collaborative, and Sarasota County Libraries held the annual Books and Badges literacy event on Thursday.

The event commemorated the Campaign for Grade Level Reading's National Summer Learning Week by providing free books for children from lower income families. The program aims to reduce "summer learning loss" – an educational decline that can happen when children are out of school – while providing positive interaction with police, who handed out the books, to improve relationships and trust between Sarasota Police and families in public housing, a news release stated. "Two of our core passions at the Sarasota Housing Authority are early childhood education and building trust between our families and local law enforcement. Books and Badges moves the needle on both issues and we are excited to bring this back to our community this year," said William Russell, CEO of the Sarasota Housing Authority.

Sarasota Police Chief Rex Troche added: "We're humbled and honored to have our officers spend time with children reading and continuing to foster positive relationships over a love of books."

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Books and Badges provides free books for low-income kids to mitigate against summer learning loss as well as positive interaction with police, who helped hand out books to improve relationships and trust between Sarasota Police and families residing in public housing.

PHOTOS BY THOMAS BENDER/HERALD-TRIBUNE



Sarasota police officer Danny Robbins with Javion Davis, 13, who receives some free books with a fist bump.



The Books and Badges literacy event got books into the hands of approximately 190 families on Thursday.



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Mason King, 6, of Sarasota, shows off a book he received at the Books and Badges event Thursday.



Sarasota police officer J. Harris with Willie Malone, 13, of Sarasota, and Javion Davis, 13, of Tampa.