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BankRI teams up for reading again

Once again accepting donations for Books Are Wings after helping out with non-profit's book drive last year

KENDRA LEIGH MILLER
kmliller@ricentral.com

COVENTRY — Throughout the month of March, BankRI is hosting a book drive in each of its 19 branches in partnership with Books Are Wings, offering members of the community a convenient way to support literacy gains among Rhode Island children by making a donation of new and gently-used books.

This year's collection marks the bank's fifth annual partnership with Books Are Wings, a local nonprofit that works to put free books in the hands of children in some of Rhode Island's neediest communities. Last year's effort generated more than 2,000 books, which were distributed to students in Central Falls, helping Books Are Wings expand its offerings to include an intensive six-week literacy program for children with the greatest need.

"As an avid reader and lover of books, I am proud to be part of a tradition that will help foster the same with today's youth," said Liane Presley, bank branch manager for the Coventry location. "Too much of our time is spent in front of television and computer screens!"

Presley said last year, the Coventry office contributed 286 to the 2,000-book total.

"It would be great to beat that this year!" she said. "I think people really enjoy sharing the stories they loved with their own children, and knowing another family will get pleasure out of them as

well."

According to Rhode Island Kids Count, 56 percent of Central Falls fourth graders are not proficient in reading.

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BankRI is hoping to exceed last year's results, setting a goal of collecting 2,500 books in 2015.

"The reading proficiency gap in Rhode Island between low-income students and their more affluent peers is not only well-documented, it's troubling," said Patricia O'Donnell-Saracino, Vice President of Community Relations for BankRI. "At BankRI, this drive is something that we are entirely committed to and has become an effort our customers and staff look forward to being a part of each year — we all want to help children develop a love of reading at a young age, and this collection is a positive step in achieving that goal."

In addition to hosting its month-long book drive, BankRI has also awarded a \$2,000 grant to Books Are Wings. The funds will be used to provide literacy supplies to 650 Central Falls students and the distribution of an additional 1,300 books through a School Book Party and Early Learning Book Party organized by Books Are Wings.