

Kids gather in their PJs for ReadBoston story time at Hotel Commonwealth

Photos



Photo by Mark Thomson

Kerri Schmidt, right, and Sarah Farbo, both from the ReadBoston program, entertained families during a pajama party at the Hotel Commonwealth on Friday night. The event raised money for the city's ReadBoston program.

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Allston-Brighton – Children clad in pajamas gathered at Hotel Commonwealth with their families for an evening of readings and performances by ReadBoston professional storytellers.

ReadBoston, a nonprofit children's literacy organization founded by Mayor Thomas Menino in 1995, partnered with Hotel Commonwealth, in Kenmore Square, for the Bedtime Stories Pajama Party on Friday, Feb. 19.

The hotel matched the \$10 suggested donation from each family. All proceeds were donated to ReadBoston's Storymobile Program.

The mission of ReadBoston is to ensure that every child in Boston can read at grade level by the end of the third grade. Programs reach children, from birth through age 8, in school, after school, during summer vacation and before they're old enough to attend school. Boston is one of the first cities in the U.S. to launch a citywide endeavor to help children learn to read.

About 65 children, ages 3 through 9, assembled on a carpet to sing and read with ReadBoston storytellers Anna Adler, Kerri Schmidt and Sarah Farbo. The trio put on an interactive performance for the children, with Adler as a mother wearing a pink nightgown, and Schmidt and Farbo as her two daughters preparing for bedtime.

As Adler read "The Paper Bag Princess" by Robert Munsch, Schmidt and Farbo each played a role as the princess and the dragon. The women also read "Time to Sleep" by Denise Fleming, and "Don't Let the Pigeons Stay Up Late!" by Mo Willems.

"ReadBoston chose the books because they're interactive, funny, and they get the kids involved. They all have the theme of sleeping," said Adler, who has worked with ReadBoston for nine years.

While singing "Five Little Monkeys" and "Roll Over," the women chose several children to participate. The children eagerly waved their arms in hope of being selected. The children giggled and cheered in excitement as the women sang and acted out the motions of the songs.

"There was a moment when we were singing, and the kids were laughing and jumping around. I loved feeding off their energy, and I loved their response to our storytelling. The kids were so excited, and it made me happy. You can't plan a moment like that," said Adler.

Special guest reader Terry Guiney, owner of Hotel Commonwealth, read "Where the Wild Things Are" by Maurice Sendak. Two girls nestled up next to Guiney and shared a seat with him. By the middle of the book, about 15 children were climbing on Guiney's chair, trying to push their

way through to get closer to the action.

“The hotel has an attachment to literacy and education in general,” said Adam Sperling, general manager of Hotel Commonwealth. The hotel previously partnered with ReadBoston and sponsored the Great Fenway Park Writers Series. The Pajama Party is the first children’s literary event at the hotel.

The Bedtime Stories Pajama Party kicked off the first night of the “Hotel for Kids” package by providing children with a welcome backpack containing LL Bean slippers, a book, a flashlight and the hotel’s signature teddy bear. A board game and DVD selection are delivered to each room with complimentary popcorn. The package is available through March 31.

The money collected from the Pajama Party was donated to Storymobile, a community based program of ReadBoston. Storymobiles travel to summer programs throughout Boston for six weeks each summer. The goal of the program is to bring literacy activities into children’s summer programs, giving children the opportunity to learn when school is not in session.

Storymobiles aim to provide literacy programs to low-income children in all neighborhoods of Boston. Professional storytellers entertain children while telling them stories, and each child who attends takes a book home. During the summer of 2009, Storymobiles distributed 48,000 books to children, and reached 75 sites.

“We work with the under-resourced and underserved population, bringing materials and resources into different neighborhoods in Boston. Our hope is that we can reach more and more children with our resources and training. We want to help the kids succeed through our programs,” said Adler.

The most rewarding part of working for ReadBoston, according to Adler, is when she sees the children turn a corner in terms of their skill and interest in reading. “Before they didn’t feel confident, or didn’t feel they were readers, and all of a sudden they say they can read and love books!” said Adler.

After the performance at the hotel, children made their own hot chocolate, adding marshmallows, whipped cream and chocolate sprinkles, while munching on cookies. The families had the opportunity to purchase hardcover, paperback and board books from a table of ReadBoston’s favorite books.

Hotel Commonwealth believes in ReadBoston as an organization, said Sperling, and plans to have an ongoing partnership with it.

Photos



Photo by Mark Thomson

Kids enjoy a pajama party for families at the Hotel Commonwealth where entertainment was provided by the storytellers of the Read Boston program.



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Colin Blackburn, 9, is having a good time during a pajama party on Friday night at the Hotel Commonwealth. About 65 children, ages 3 through 9, assembled on a carpet and read with ReadBoston storytellers Anna Adler, Kerri Schmidt and Sarah Farbo. The trio put on an interactive performance for the children, with Adler as a mother wearing a pink nightgown, and Schmidt and Farbo as her two daughters preparing for bedtime.