

SUPPORT TOOLS FOR LITERACY FOR CHILDREN

Fairfield has a time machine, well; actually Fairfield has quite a few of them.

Madame P and I frequently go on a time travel date to Bob and Linda's Country Café. It's at the corner of Airbase and North Texas St. and just a slow circle-back to the roundabout of reminiscences of home spun humor and hearty meals. It's a sashay down "smells like mom's in the kitchen" sweet memory lane. Prices are low, portions are bountiful and affection and connection are highly prized daily specials always on the menu. On a good day, ya just might spy Mayberry's best barber wide eyed and open mouthed tsk-tsking the latest gossip with Goober. They serve Americana with all the fixings.

Every other month, some time travelers meet in the shamelessly dubbed banquet room, perhaps hoping the mannequin maestro at the makeshift piano bar will tinkle out a little Floyd Kramer or Andy Williams tune.

Murray Bass, the curmudgeonly hoary headed bubbalah of budgets and denizen of a delightful Daily Republic column on brighter times, was there this past week. As his guest, I sat rapt by the passion in his failing eyes and caught up in his soaring sprit held aloft by a keen head and happy heart laser-focused on a mission; literacy.

The lack of progress in literacy rates and inadequate education for life are a national disgrace that harms all of us. That affects you. The world is safer, richer and joyful when our K- 12 consumers become producers, innovators and creators. Wages, health and longevity increase with literacy and crime falls. There is a need to read

I was embarrassed learning how Murray and his buddies have for seven years spent time to fight the passing of a time when literacy was as prized and pursued a possession as any icon of the addictive technocracy we "surround sound" ourselves with today. Murray is the President of Tools of Learning for Children (TLC), a highly successful yet not widely known nonprofit organization that invests mightily in everyone's greatest investment, our children- preschoolers to be exact. Tools of Learning for Children gives free comprehensive phonics education kits to any wanting preschooler with the time proven phenomenal results traditional directed learning phonics education is renowned for having.

In seven years these folks have collected more than \$200,000 dollars from (to name but only a few) The Frank and Eva Buck Foundation, McDonalds, Copart, Mervyns, Target, Valero Oil, Triad Developers, Credit Bureau Associates, the Billy Yarbrough Family, the County Office of Education, Solano First Bank and the indubitably greatest forgers of futures of our young, moms and pops. They have distributed about fifteen thousand kits to places such as Vacaville Christian preschool, Kiddie Academy, Fairfield Community Services, The Lighthouse and other preschools through the county; all with fabulous results.

The TLC advisor list includes former mayor and Fairfield Suisun Unified School District Board president Gary Falati, a prior county treasurer, former Vacaville Reporter publisher Steve Huddleston, attorney

Anthony Russo and now me and incredibly big hearted Paul Fondersmith, the web wizard who was indispensable in the Arts Gone Wild Gala and is crucial to the fledgling Fairfield Arts Consortium.

The need to read is a communal itch we can't stop scratching. All preschoolers must be equipped with one of the quintessential tools for learning and life. You must read to succeed.

The power of literacy transcends time and at no time has there been or will there be a machine like the literate human mind. In no time it can move the mountains of mediocrity and quicken the alchemy of incredible achievements. Every preschooler needs TLC.

I and "u" can be long or short vowels. I and you should think about spending time, long or short, helping what should be a national endeavor. Call Murray at 427 0744 or Mbass25@sbcglobal.net

Kevin Ryan is a retired Colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield.