

Joy of Reading: The D.C. Area Association Reaches Out to Local School Children

by Margarette Shovlin

In 2001, Eddie Eitches, past president of the D.C. Area Phi Beta Kappa Association, recommended to the association's executive board that a reading program for elementary school children be started to complement the High School Award Program, which recognizes scholastic achievement in Washington, D.C., Virginia and Maryland. Joanne Hsu volunteered to chair the program and solicited volunteers among our members. In 2003, second graders at Washington's Brightwood Elementary School became the first students to participate in the program. The excitement and joy the children expressed when given a book of their own to keep gave the program its name, Joy of Reading.

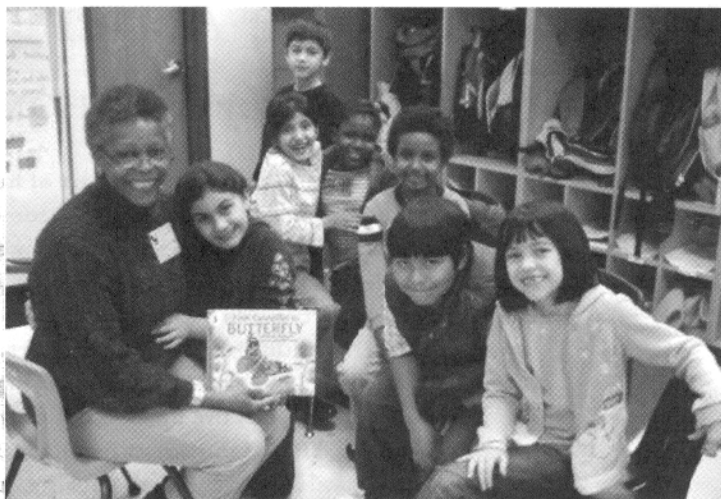
Joy of Reading serves children at schools in economically disadvantaged districts. The objective is to promote a love of reading at a young age by inspiring children with classic children's literature and great storytelling in a supportive environment. To encourage them to continue reading and enjoy books in their time away from school, each child also receives a free copy of one of the books read to them during the program.

Books included in Joy of Reading are time-honored favorites and award

winners, such as the Caldecott Honor Book *Frog and Toad Are Friends* by Arnold Lobel and the Outstanding Science Trade Book for

Children *From Caterpillar to Butterfly* by Deborah Heiligman and Bari Weissman. Before the program begins, a reading list is proposed by the Joy of Reading coordinator, and the teacher selects books from this list that are compatible with state standards for learning and the school's curriculum. Program volunteers visit the school twice a year and read to second graders in small groups. At the end of the second session, each student, the teacher and the school's library are given a copy of one of the books. So far, more than 300 books have been distributed.

With generous financial support from our members and cooperation from local schools, Joy of Reading is thriving. At our association's biannual board meeting, President Christel



Margarette Shovlin reads *From Caterpillar to Butterfly* to second grade students at Glen Forest Elementary School in Fairfax, Va.

McDonald and the executive board agreed to expand Joy of Reading throughout the Washington metropolitan area. After discussions between Nicole Newburg-Rinn of the D.C. association and Dr. Murray Steinberg and John Stack of the Baltimore association, Joy of Reading is also being expanded to include schools in Baltimore.

If you live in Washington, D.C., Virginia or Maryland and would like to get involved, please contact me, Margarette Shovlin, at mshovlin@msn.com. ■

Margarette Shovlin, coordinator of the Joy of Reading program, earned her bachelor's degree in human relations from Trinity University where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.