

BW engages with students to promote reading

By **BRIAN GEORGE**

As the Gilles-Sweet second-grade students started their Friday morning routine last week, they were greeted by something different — students from Baldwin Wallace ready to help them nurture a love of reading.

They eagerly gathered around as each visitor from the college read them a story, in this case, a book called “The Hog Mollies and the visit with Victoria.”

This is the first year that Gilles-Sweet Elementary has partnered with the 2nd & 7 Foundation, an initiative meant to promote positive role models and literacy by having college students participate in weekly readings in second-grade classrooms. The partnership, started this year with Gilles-Sweet, is about connecting students with Baldwin Wallace University education students. The BW students meet with students to help with mathematics and literacy three times a week.

“We hope to engage with the students and get them to discover the joys of reading,” said the Director of the BW Center for Coaching Excellence Dr. Kerry A. Bebie.

The 2nd & 7 program began in 1999, started by three former Ohio State Buckeye football players who were inspired by their community outreach involvement to promote literacy and positivity to students of central Ohio. The three players had raised enough funds that they were able to visit seven second-grade classrooms during their first iteration of the initiative, which is why it is called “2nd & 7.”

The initiative has donated more than 500,000 books to children in need all across the country since its inception.

New books written by the foundation, such as its series called “The Hog Mollies,” are introduced monthly. Each has the goal of

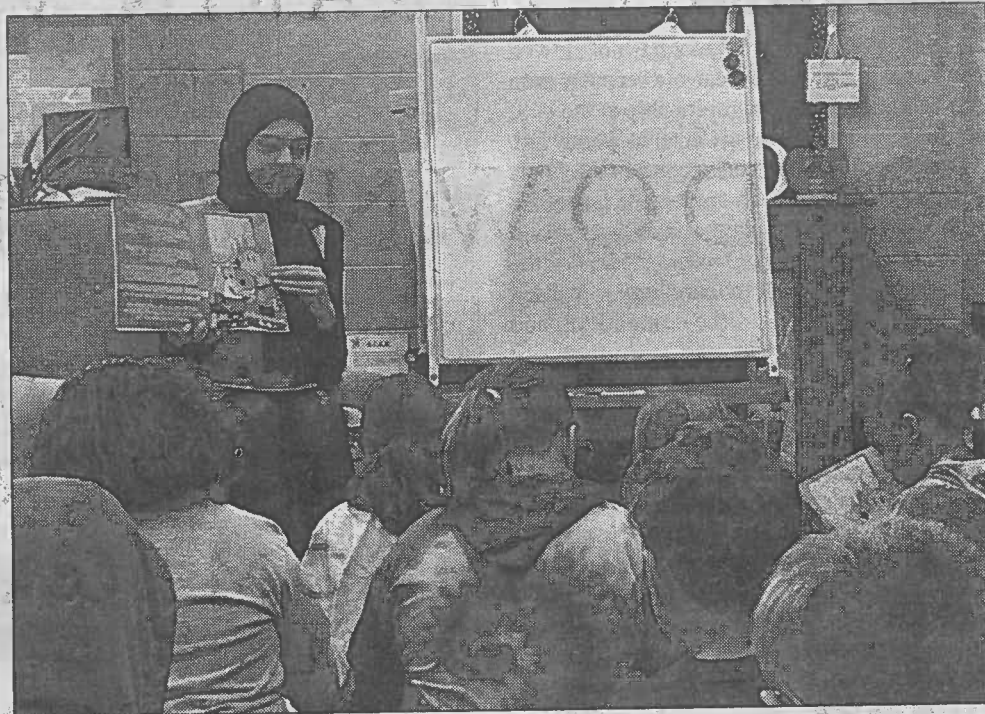


Photo by Brian George

Gilles-Sweet partners with Baldwin Wallace to nurture a love of reading.

encouraging students to talk about how they are feeling, have meaningful discussions and learn important life lessons. Each book begins with a pledge for the students to read every night, do their homework, work hard at school, respect their teachers and classmates and do the right thing.

“We are the only chapter in Northeast Ohio,” Bebie said. “But it has been amazing to see how much it has grown.”

The schools that are partnered with the 2nd & 7 Foundation are Orchard Park Academy and Mary Queen of Peace, both in Cleveland, along with Gilles-Sweet Elementary School.

“At Fairview Park, we’re always looking for

different ways to engage students in literacy,” said Gilles-Sweet Elementary School Associate Principal Shanna Kovi. “To bring in these young future educators to come and read to our students is really beneficial for the students. It gives our students the opportunity to hear another voice and to see someone that isn’t their teacher. Partnering with Baldwin Wallace helps to expose our students to people in college and helps them to make connections. It is a truly rewarding and exciting experience for Fairview Park second-grade students.”

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