

By: Representative Bentley

## HOUSE RESOLUTION

TO RECOGNIZE THE CONWAY KIWANIS BOOKCASE FOR EVERY CHILD PROJECT FOR INCREASING LITERACY AND STUDENT RETENTION RATES BY BUILDING PERSONALIZED BOOKCASES AS GIFTS FOR CHILDREN ENROLLED IN THE FEDERAL HEAD START PROGRAM.

### Subtitle

TO RECOGNIZE THE CONWAY KIWANIS BOOKCASE FOR EVERY CHILD PROJECT FOR INCREASING LITERACY AND STUDENT RETENTION RATES BY BUILDING PERSONALIZED BOOKCASES AS GIFTS FOR CHILDREN ENROLLED IN THE FEDERAL HEAD START PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project works to increase literacy and student retention in schools by building personalized oak bookcases of good quality and giving these, along with a starter set of gently used books, annually to fifty (50) children four (4) and five (5) years of age who are enrolled in the federal Head Start program administered by the Community Action Program for Central Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, since 2005, one thousand (1,000) children have received bookcases through the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project; and

WHEREAS, Jim Davidson, author of several motivational books, is the founder of the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project; and



WHEREAS, former Conway Police Chief Randall Aragon was highly instrumental in starting the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project; and

WHEREAS, Jim Davidson recalled that he asked a friend named Howard Welch, who was a member of Davidson's Sunday school class and had a woodworking shop at his home, to make a sample bookcase; and

WHEREAS, the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project began with a plan to give a bookcase to each child in the local Head Start program, and the director of the local Head Start program at that time was Phyllis Fry, who was also a member of Jim Davidson's church; and

WHEREAS, the original members of the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project committee were founder Jim Davidson, former Conway Police Chief Randall Aragon, former local Head Start director Phyllis Fry, Hendrix College head librarian Amanda Moore, publisher of the Log Cabin Democrat Scot Morrissey, retired business executive and master craftsman Mickey Cox, housewife Nina Russ, Faulkner County librarian Ruth Voss, pastor of Cornerstone Bible Church Dr. Larry Pillow, businesswoman Linda Linn, retired school teacher Nancy Mitchell, retired school counselor Linda Hammontree, and executive director of the Conway Housing Authority Mary Boyd; and

WHEREAS, the first committee meeting for the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project committee was held on June 9, 2005, at City Hall in Conway; and

WHEREAS, the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project is focused on helping preschool children who are being raised in low-income homes and the need to serve these children took on even greater significance for Jim Davidson when he learned that sixty-one percent (61%) of low-income families in the nation had no books at all in their homes; and

WHEREAS, in early 2020, the Kiwanis Club of Conway assumed oversight of the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project from Jim Davidson, who is still active in the project; and

WHEREAS, Richard Plotkin is the chair of the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project; and

WHEREAS, Richard Plotkin is part of the seven-person operating committee, composed of executive director of University of Central Arkansas Public Appearances Amanda Horton, Faulkner County Collector Sherry Koonce, director of the Faulkner-Van Buren Regional Library John McGraw, University of Central Arkansas Associate Professor Charlotte Rainey Parham, sixth-grade literacy teacher Janie Walburn, and executive director of the Community Action Program for Central Arkansas Jennifer Welter, that provides functional oversight of the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project; and

WHEREAS, the ultimate goal of the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project is to promote literacy at an early age, enhancing the potential of participating children to excel at all levels of education and in their eventual chosen professions; and

WHEREAS, the bookcases awarded in 2024 through the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project were built by the Nabholz Construction millwork shop in Conway, and Centennial Bank; and

WHEREAS, Conway Corp and Virco Inc., each agreed to donate one thousand dollars (\$1,000) beginning in 2024 for bookcase construction, and are therefore considered "Sustaining Partners" of the project; and

WHEREAS, the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project bookcases are personalized for each child with a nameplate created and donated by Billy's Trophies & Awards of Conway; and

WHEREAS, each child who receives a bookcase via the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project also receives a stuffed animal "reading buddy" donated by project supporter Crystal Spellmann and a personalized bookmark handcrafted by Carol Crockett, manager of the Faulkner County Satellite Office of Child Care Aware of Northcentral Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, the primary source of books for the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project is the Faulkner County Library, which supplies the project books it receives through community donations and supplements this via numerous supporters including the Life 10 Sunday school class at Conway First Baptist Church, which buys a children's Bible and a book of bedtime Bible stories for each recipient,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House of Representatives recognize the Conway Kiwanis Bookcase for Every Child project for its work to increase literacy and student retention rates by building personalized bookcases as gifts for children enrolled in the federal Head Start program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon adoption, a copy of this resolution be presented to Richard Plotkin by the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives.