

United Way Announces Student Winners of Winter Reading Challenge

Local students read more than 7,000 books and 3.7 million words over break

FITCHBURG, MA, UNITED STATES, May 22, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [United Way of North Central Massachusetts](#) (UWNCM) recently recognized local student winners of their annual Winter Reading Challenge. Three students and one classroom received awards for the challenge, which encouraged students in pre-K to 3rd grade to complete literacy activities over the 2022-23 school winter break.



The Winter Reading Challenge is run by UWNCM in collaboration with the Early Literacy Innovation Zone of North Central Massachusetts. This year's challenge took place from December 19, 2022 to January 31, 2023. Students participated by reading, writing and playing educational games on Footsteps2Brilliance, an award-winning English and Spanish [literacy app](#) that helps children develop essential early literacy skills.

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Overall, students in this year's challenge read 17% more than last year, achieving a total of 3.78 million words read, 7,033 books read, and 1,711 hours spent on literacy. The challenge not only kept students engaged over break but also offered a creative outlet for many students with special needs and learning disabilities.

Competition winners were determined based on a combination of factors, including hours spent on literacy,

words read, books read, books written, and games played. First place winner Nadiel Marizan, a Pre-K student from South Street School in Fitchburg, spent 30 hours on literacy; second place winner Gabriel Rosada, a Pre-K student from the Athol Area YMCA Preschool in Athol, read over 46,000 words; and third place winner Arys Gray, a Kindergarten student from South Street

School in Fitchburg, spent nearly 20 hours on literacy.

The winning class was a preschool class from South Street School in Fitchburg under teacher Lynn Thomas. The class is part of an inclusive classroom in which many students use hearing devices, and Footsteps2Brilliance is part of their daily curriculum.

The competition's three student winners each received a Kindle Fire Tablet and gift baskets, while the winning class got surprise goodie bags containing t-shirts and school supplies. In addition, all students who participated in the challenge received a certificate of achievement.

Ilene Rosenthal, CEO of Footsteps2Brilliance, says that the Footsteps2Brilliance team was impressed with all the challenge participants and thrilled to see the impression the app is making in the region. "The results were beyond all expectations," says Rosenthal. "This is an incredible example of the collective impact that the United Way and its partners are having on the communities they serve."

UWNCM President Kory Eng adds, "We were excited to recognize these children who worked so hard, and we applaud the parents who have made literacy a priority in their families. We encourage all residents within the Innovation Zone to use the Footsteps2Brilliance programs for 15 minutes a day."

The Early Literacy Innovation Zone is a public/private partnership supported by UWNCM and Footsteps2Brilliance. It is available for free to all schools and families in participating school districts. Since 2018, children in North Central Massachusetts have spent over 87,000 hours on the app, reading over 250,000,000 words. Learn more about the program at <https://myf2b.com/iz>.

The United Way of North Central Massachusetts serves the communities of Ashburnham, Ashby, Athol, Ayer, Devens, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Harvard, Hubbardston, Leominster, Littleton, Pepperell, Lunenburg, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Shirley, Templeton, Townsend, Westminster, and Winchendon.

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