

Expert Technology Associates Joins the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce to Promote Early Childhood Literacy

Expert Technology Associates Vice President and Director of Sales & Client Services Debbie Smith and Ed Terry read to eager Kindergarten and pre-K students at McMichael and Bregy Elementary Schools as part of the recent Read to Me Early Literacy Program, organized by the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and the School District of Philadelphia.

Ms. Smith and Ms. Terry were two of 84 high level executives who took time out of their busy schedules to read *Seven Blind Mice* by Ed Young to over 2,000 students at 15 public schools throughout the city.

The goal: to promote the importance of early childhood literacy & regularly reading aloud to young children.

The event is symbolic of the business community's tangible commitment to continue providing professional development workshops for teachers and parents and donations of 300 hardback books for the schools – to create a lasting impression on young students and their families.

Studies show that children who are read to at an early age become more literate. As a result they have a greater chance for later school success, because reading is the fundamental skill on which further academic attainments is built.

Sponsored by Bank of America, and with the support of Endo Pharmaceuticals, Lockheed Martin, UPS and Wal-Mart, the program grew by 30% from last year, resulting in the inclusion of an additional three schools.

Over 95 corporations throughout the region made financial contributions to this year's program – and many of the CEOs from these same companies were among the readers who sat in a circle in a Philadelphia school surrounded by four- and five-year-olds who were waiting to hear how the story would end.

Their involvement is meant to draw attention to the value of reading to youngsters and to encourage other adults to do the same.

“Not only is Bank of America proud to have sponsored such a beneficial program, but it was very gratifying to see so many executives in the region showing their support and utmost dedication for Read to Me,” said **Dan Fitzpatrick**, President, Bank of America, PA and chairman of Read to Me. “It was most rewarding, however, to see the sheer delight in the schoolchildren as they excitedly followed along as we read aloud. I’m glad that I could share my love of reading with them, and I hope they will share that love with their parents, caregivers and siblings.”

Chamber President & CEO **Mark Schweiker** added, “The Chamber, Bank of America and all of the other program sponsors are committed to ensuring that Philadelphia school children have access to opportunity. Literacy is the key to opening the doors... and when children develop a love of reading, the realization of what they can aspire to and achieve becomes limitless.”

Donations of time and money (for more books) are always welcome. For more information, contact Tara Quay at 215-790-3732 or email tquay@greaterphilachamber.com.