

Featured Volunteer

Paul Pranghofer: “Children are our future.”

What were the reasons you decided to volunteer?

After 34 years as a software engineer, I had retired and was looking for something enjoyable to do. My neighbor is a teacher at Noble Elementary and she and I talked about helping out in her classroom. Reading was difficult for me when I was in school so I wanted to help children read better and enjoy reading.

What do you do as a volunteer?

I assist 3rd graders in the school library who are behind in reading, usually three students per visit, but one at a time. I have the child choose the book from the selection provided by the teacher. I also find it helpful to ask questions about the story as we go along and have the student try to sound out the words with a little help. I help with math sometimes, too.

What do you enjoy about your experience?

My wife and I don't have children and I enjoy being around them and have the chance to help them.

What advice do you have for new volunteers?

Don't be afraid to get involved. Remember, you are building a relationship with children. Take a few minutes to just chat with them to learn what is important to them, what's going on in their lives, and how the day is going. Be another adult who takes the time to know a child and encourage him or her. Children are our future. I'm excited about it!

What impact has volunteering had on your life?

This has been a very rewarding experience for me. I remember helping a student who had an unstable home life. He only saw sports as part of his future and would neglect his studies. One day, he asked me to help him with a project that we worked on together for some time. The student continued working on the project at home which he was not willing to do before. I learned that the student got a good grade on the project. This was the first time the teacher saw the child take pride in something he had done at school.



What impact do you see that volunteering has on the people at the school? (Students, teachers, etc.?)

It is rewarding to see the students improve their reading skills and actually start choosing more difficult books. I think both students and staff are more comfortable with people who have disabilities because they are used to seeing me at the school each week.

What is the school environment like? What is it like to be in a school today?

Things are different from when I attended school! For one thing, there are security measures when you check in that we didn't have. Each week, I see the dedication of the teachers and have a greater appreciation for what they do. There is so much unfairness directed at teachers today. My wife and I are on fixed incomes, but my experience as a volunteer was the biggest reason I voted "Yes" on the last referendum.

About the Volunteer...

...from the teacher

“Having Paul in my room these last few years has been a **win-win-win** situation all around. **The students win** because of the privilege of getting to know such a warm, caring individual who has overcome and succeeded on so many levels. He has taught them perseverance, courage and the importance of a sense of humor. He has been a cheerleader for them, an encourager when things are hard, and an example of caring for others. **I win** because Paul gives the one-on-one attention as the kids read and discuss their books that I can't always provide. **Paul wins** because it's something he truly enjoys and it helps him continue his philanthropic community work. I am truly thankful for his willingness to give to my classroom.”

...from the students

“He helps you with words.”

“He's interested in stuff you don't know about.”

“He's got a positive attitude...he's always smiling when he comes into our room.”

“He says 'good morning' to us when he sees us.”

“He compliments me when I read and try hard.”

“He is just so nice to us.”

**The heart of a volunteer is not measured in size, but by
the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the
lives of others.**
DeAnn Hollis



Jill Kaufman, Coordinator
763-504-6991
Jill_Kaufman@rdale.org

Volunteers In Partnership
Sandburg Learning Center
2400 Sandburg Lane, Room 118
Golden Valley, MN 55427

Mindy Potvin, Program Assistant
763-504-6994
Mindy_Potvin@rdale.org

