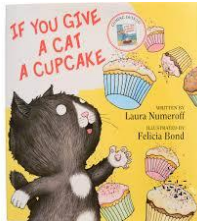


Books, Cats, and Cupcakes!

How's that for a description of this past month's activities at the Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center?! Well, it's true.

The Center's Youth Services Program Coordinator, Teresa Allen, tells us that our students improved their reading skills with *Step into a Book* and a reading session called "Popcorn Reading."



"We chose a book entitled *If You Give a Cat a Cupcake*. The actual reading of the book was a YouTube video, and we had the children sit in front of the computer and listen to the reading of the book. While they were watching the video, we served them cheese popcorn and after the video we asked questions about the book and what they learned." Later,

Teresa says "we also had free choice which allowed our students to choose any book they wanted to read in a casual way. The children really enjoyed this theme and participated in the activities with a lot of smiling faces!"

The children didn't just learn about cats and cupcakes. Teresa says they also spent time discussing their emotions in an activity called Identifying Emotions.

"The activity was started by placing slips of paper with an emotion written on it in a jar and each person had to pick an emotion out the jar and then act it out. During the activity there was a lot of laughter, and the children had a good time with it. After we finished, the group returned to their seats and discussed how they could be more aware of other's feelings and do a better job of being kind!" Maybe something we could all use? Just sayin'....



There is a not so hidden goal to all of this activity. Teresa says "we have challenged our children to really concentrate on their reading skills and the goal is to get them as close to being able to read at their grade level as possible. We have come a long way to getting the children to really focus on what we're trying to accomplish."

Speaking of reading, our Summer Camp program is just a bit more than a month away, and planning is well underway. One of the goals of camp is to help the students to at least maintain their reading skills over the summer. To that end, Center Executive Director, Michelle Williams attended the *Summer Learning Matters: Together, We Make a Difference* event.

"The event was an incredible opportunity to celebrate the collective efforts of community-based organizations in combating the summer learning slide and to advocate for the

continued resources needed to support summer learning programs. We were reminded of the power of leveraging the summer months to close the literacy gap.”

Eric F. Mease

Member, Board of Directors

The Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center