



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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April 28, 2010 – PA One Book Early Literacy Initiative

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Have you ever read about inside mice and outside mice – or about a polar bear and a goose that were splendid friends – or about vegetables growing up, down and all around? If you recognize these themes, then you have already participated in PA One Book, Every Young Child. This program, now in its fifth year, stresses the importance of early literacy activities and each year highlights an exceptional picture book for young children. With support from Smart Start-Centre County, many libraries, schools, child care sites, physicians' offices, Care Partnership Communities That Care, and other agencies connected with children will be participating in this year's PA One Book activities which began in April and will continue throughout the year.

The 2010 selection is entitled *What a Treasure!* by Jane and Will Hillenbrand. Since the book was published in 2006, children have been accompanying Mole on his dig as he discovers exciting treasures for both his animal friends and for himself.

In March, Dr. Susan Neuman of the University of Michigan was a presenter at the National Public Library Conference. According to Dr. Neuman, there are two kinds of reading skills: constrained and unconstrained. Constrained skills include phonological awareness, letter names and concepts of print. They grow and develop until they reach a maximum level – then they stop. Use the alphabet as an example – once you have learned the letters, you've reached your goal – learning the 26 letters was as far as you could go with that skill.

But unconstrained skills are a very different story. They include vocabulary and comprehension, and these skills continue to grow as we get older. Whether you're eight months old or eighty years old, your vocabulary and comprehension skills continue to develop – and the best way to develop them is through reading. Think about this – reading is the single most important activity for literacy development among ALL age groups.

The One Book, Every Young Child program goes far beyond just giving parents and caregivers a book to read to preschoolers. The program's design is based on studies showing that simply reading a book is not enough. Adults and caregivers must find ways to engage children in activities like talking about a book's cover and illustrations, discussing the action in the book and favorite parts or engaging in pretend play related to the book. These story-stretching activities have been shown to be crucial to early learning and are a simple and fun way that young children are prepared and ready to learn when they begin school.

If you are adult with a child in your life, you don't have to have a degree in early childhood education to provide these interactions. You can simply follow the child's interests or go to www.paonebook.org to find an excellent list of resources and suggestions to make *What a Treasure!* an effective, interactive read-aloud story as well as an activity guide with ideas for further play.

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