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***SANTA MARIA JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT***

**PRESS RELEASE**

September 2, 2020

Books are the path to full literacy and a SMHS teacher is making sure the trail is clear with a Stowell Road sidewalk book drive/giveaway Wednesdays and Thursdays.

English teacher Annie Turner started her personal literacy effort after realizing her students lacked the books to fulfill a “free reading” book report assignment per quarter. The students told her they did not know where to get books or have access to books in their homes.

High interest and relevant books between the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and collegiate level are needed. The book drive is from 1:45 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. in front of the bus drop-off/pick-up zone.

“This sidewalk special is my attempt to promote literacy and reading in the children and community,” Turner said. “It is for all SMHS students and anyone who walks by. My goal is to get books into the community and increase literacy for all levels. The more kids read, the better equipped they'll be.”

Turner believes the need to promote literacy is vital.

“Until our students and children of Santa Maria have true equity and access to books and knowledge, grass roots efforts for positivity and literacy should continue,” she added. “While students at SMHS are language rich (most are bilingual or multilingual), they are not vocabulary rich or very literate in any language.”

The outreach is also targeting future Saints.

“We have a lot of children books for siblings so that by the time those kids get to high school, they have a love of literature and reading - or at least have had a chance to read and build their skills outside of school,” Turner said. “This is especially valuable during COVID times when school is on a screen and a TV or tablet is the free babysitter.”

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