



By Andrea E. Garcia

Not too long ago, Betty Knoll and a few members from St. Mark's Lutheran Church recognized the need to develop an afterschool reading program for young children in the Fairfield community.

"If a child is behind in primary school, they really never catch up; they will always remain behind," the 70-year-old Fairfield resident said of children in grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup>. "If they don't get help now, they will be set up for failure."

Her years of experience working with children have given Knoll the knowledge to recognize the importance of reading. For 35 years, she has been teaching in the Mount Diablo Unified School District, 20 of which have been concentrated as a reading specialist. And she knows the difference reading can make to a student.

"It curbs their behavior in the classroom and gives them self-esteem and confidence," she said.

The reading program at St. Mark's, still in its infancy stages, would also teach parents of these children as "it helps the community when parents are learning to help their own children read."

To make this program flourish and become a reality in the community, Knoll and her friend, Pat Broschard, attended one of Solano Community Foundation's free workshops, held at the Fairfield Civic Center Library.

Presented by Fund Administrator Connie Harris, this particular workshop, "Grantseeking Basics," helps provide an overview of the funding research process for those seeking grants from foundations, corporations, and grantmaking public charities.

The research is done through a database called Foundation Directory Online, available at Solano Community Foundation and is the only one in the area.

"I don't think people realize what incredible resources are available at the Foundation," Knoll commented. "Connie took us by the hand and showed us how we can get some really good grants. She was so helpful - it was an incredible experience and it's an incredible facility."

Foundation Directory Online provides broad access to information, research, and education. It offers an online database that contains more than 96,000 private and corporate grantmakers, includes searchable 990 PF forms (tax returns), descriptions of foundations and their fields of interests, and links to funders' own websites.

So far, Knoll has found seven possible grants and is in the process of writing proposals.

“I’m encouraged to know there is so much help out there for so many people. That is what America is about – helping each other, the foundation of our country,” she said. “There is a ton of information at the (Solano Community) Foundation and people should be using this resource.”

The Foundation Directory Online is available to the public from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday at Solano Community Foundation, 1261 Travis Boulevard, Suite 320, in Fairfield. Please call ahead to reserve a spot at 707-399-3846.

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