

## **Los Altos Town Crier**

Wed May 28, 2008

### **Congregation Beth Am, EPAK teaming up for student literacy**

Congregation Beth Am of Los Altos Hills and the East Palo Alto Kids Foundation (EPAK), a recipient of the Town Crier's annual Holiday Fund, have teamed up to launch the Costaño School Reading Project, an initiative to enhance literacy and reading skills at Costaño Elementary School, a public school in East Palo Alto.

The project encompasses a number of activities, including:

- Library refurbishment, including procurement of furniture, books and computers, as well as curriculum support to ensure that there are age- and grade-appropriate books available that dovetail with and reinforce the classroom curricula.
- Provision of a handmade bookshelf and an appropriate supply of books for each second-grade student to take home.
- Supplemental reading assistance for students and their parents/families, including volunteer tutoring, literacy events and organized family reading activities at the school.

According to Richard Stark, coordinator of the project for Congregation Beth Am, many students at Costaño are from immigrant families, and many have parents who do not speak English. Consequently, he said, they do not experience the kinds of influences that instill a love of reading.

"Our goal is to help students build a passion for reading, because educators know that there is a strong correlation between reading proficiency and later success in school and life," Stark said. "If we can help to create that spark in just a few students, we will have served them well."

"Many of our students face obstacles that are out of our control as educators," said Gina Sudaria, assistant principal at Costaño. "If we equip them with the skills and desire to read, we empower them with the tools to access information and knowledge in order to achieve success."

While public elementary schools in Los Altos spend approximately \$23 per student each year to update their library collections, no such funds have been available for years at Costaño.

For more information, contact Stark at 504-5600 or [rstark@thestarks.org](mailto:rstark@thestarks.org).