



University of Nevada, Reno



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University and United Way partner on K-4 literacy effort

Alternative Spring Break offers University of Nevada, Reno students a way to give back to the northern Nevada Community

Reno, Nev. – Twenty University of Nevada, Reno students are trading their beach towels for tool belts this spring break as a way to give back to the northern Nevada community and promote the importance of early childhood literacy. The University’s Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement partnered with United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra to offer students an Alternative Spring Break from March 16-20, 2015 that includes the building of five Little Free Libraries and installing them in Virginia City, Fallon and Reno.

“Little Free Libraries” are hand-crafted structures that contain constantly changing collections of books. These libraries are placed throughout communities for the use of children using a “take a book, leave a book” philosophy. The libraries are built to withstand weather of all kinds and hold 20-100 books. Each of the five “Little Free Libraries” will be stocked with books donated by the Washoe County School District, Washoe County Library and Grassroots Books, as well as from University faculty and student book drives.

The Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement has networked and partnered with numerous entities and community organizations including University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Community Chest, the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe, and local businesses and contractors who have donated supplies and expertise to make this event possible. Through this civic engagement project University students learn about the importance of literacy in Nevada and gain a deeper understanding of community issues.

“The Alternative Spring Break Event is a great example of a civic engagement experience because it provides University students with the two key components necessary for successful engagement, education on a public issue and meaningful opportunity to engage on that public issue to make an impact,” Marlene Rebori, associate professor and director of the Office of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement, said. “University students will become educated on the issue of literacy in Nevada, as well as gain a deeper connection and appreciation with our community through the building and installing of Little Free Libraries.”

Locations of the five Little Free Libraries will be:

- Mariposa Academy, 3875 Glen St., Reno
- Community Health Alliance, 1055 S Wells Ave., Reno
- Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe Education Center, 8955 Mission Rd., Fallon
- Community Center, 175 East Carson Street, Virginia City
- Community Center in Mark Twain , 500 Sam Clemens Ave., Dayton



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The week-long civic engagement project's schedule includes:

- Monday, March 15: Education on literacy development and literacy issues in Nevada
- Tuesday, March 16: Build the Little Free Libraries
- Wednesday, March 17: Install the Little Free Libraries in Virginia City
- Thursday, March 18: Install the Little Free Libraries in Fallon
- Friday, March 19: Install the Little Free Libraries in Reno

As part of the “Little Free Libraries” initiative, UWNNS has committed to pay for the official registration cost of one Little Free Library through the national Little Free Libraries organization (littlefreelibrary.org) in each of the 139 zip codes UWNNS serves.

The “Little Free Libraries” project is being done in correlation with UWNNS’s unprecedented step of identifying one clear and compelling goal for the organization. In 2014, UWNNS adopted the goal to double the number of children in northern Nevada who read proficiently at the conclusion of third grade, by 2020. This is achieved through UWNNS’s support for strengthening families, nurturing the early development and learning for children birth to age three, getting kids ready for kindergarten, and supporting those all-important early grade reading skills.

“Almost 73 percent of Nevada children are not reading at grade level. This is further exacerbated by the fact that, once behind, a young, struggling student cannot catch up,” Karen Barsell, CEO and president of UWNNS, said. “For every 50 children who don’t learn to read in kindergarten, 44 of them will still have trouble in third grade. If a child comes from a low-income family, the situation is even more serious.”

There is a direct, proven relationship between third grade reading scores and high school graduation rates. In turn, high school graduation is a key factor in life success and our state’s economy.

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About United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra

UWNNS has successfully served northern Nevada for more than 70 years. (UWNNS) has completed an historic direction-setting effort to identify and concentrate on the most important social issues affecting individuals and families in the region. UWNNS has adopted the critical issue of “children reading at grade level” as its focus area moving forward. This adopted issue will allow UWNNS to better prioritize resources to address key issues in order to make the greatest impact and create lasting change. In 2015, UWNNS will reach the goal of \$100 Million raised since we started in 1942. To celebrate this goal, we have established the \$100 Million Club and invite you to join us. For more information, call 775-322-8668 or visit www.uwnns.org.

About the University of Nevada, Reno

Founded in 1874 as Nevada’s land-grant university, the University of Nevada, Reno ranks in the top tier of best national universities. With nearly 20,000 students, the University is driven to contribute a culture of student success, world-improving research and outreach that enhances communities and business. Part of the Nevada System of Higher Education, the University has the system’s largest research program and is home to the state’s medical school. Bringing outreach and education programs to all Nevada counties and home to one of the largest study-



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abroad consortiums, the University extends across the state and around the world. For more information, visit www.unr.edu.