

# **No. 939 A PROJECT EVERYONE CAN SUPPORT!**

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Jim Davidson -- NEWSPAPER COLUMN

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Every so often someone makes a comment to me that really makes an impression, and I dwell on it for a while. Such was the case a while back when I was talking with my friend Archie Musselman, director of the Community Action Program for Central Arkansas (CAPCA) and a member of the Conway Bookcase Project Committee here in our community. We were getting ready to have our sixth annual Bookcase Literacy Banquet to raise funds to build 50 more quality, personalized bookcases to give to pre-school children in low-income families. The success we had at our banquet will enable us to build the 500th bookcase since we started in 2005. These children are in the Head Start program, which is under the umbrella of CAPCA. Archie was telling me the various things they could do to help with the banquet, and I remarked that they were going above and beyond the call of duty.

He then made the comment, which is the basis for this column: "This is a project everyone can support." He was so right, but not everyone knows why this is true and the reason I wanted to present this to you, especially if you live in a community that does not have a "Bookcase for Every Child" project. First, let me say that literacy is the foundation for all personal and economic success. If you want proof of this, just look at the cities and towns that are doing really well and have a high quality of life, and you will see high rates of literacy.

On the other hand, show me a community with very low literacy rates and I will show you one where crime and insurance rates are high, good paying hi-tech jobs are in short supply or non-existent and the community is dying on the vine. Due to this condition, the tax base is very small and vital services (such as street repair, police and fire protection, schools, parks and recreation) are greatly diminished. If you live in a community like the one I

am describing, you know this is true. Now this question please: In any given community, who does illiteracy impact? The correct answer is everyone. This is why a “Bookcase for Every Child” project can make a difference, not overnight, but over time because it requires a different mindset than continuing to do the same things you have been doing. You simply have to move literacy, reading, academics and education to the front burner and focus on them until everyone in the community buys into what you are doing. This is why my friend Archie Musselman said, “This is a project everyone can support.”

At the present time we have bookcase projects in four states and they range in size from 2,000 people to more than 60,000 people involved. While available resources vary greatly, all it takes is one or two leaders who have a passion for children, especially less-fortunate children. To learn more, go to our project website: [www.bookcaseforeverychild.com](http://www.bookcaseforeverychild.com), click on the ‘project’ link and read the article “Bookcases Save Lives” to gain a good understanding of how to organize and carry out a project.

Several years ago, the United States of America led the world in test scores related to reading, math and science, but now we have slipped far below many other countries. I don’t have the space to list them but just read up on it and you will see what I am saying is true. To have a brighter future, for our children and grandchildren, we must do better in terms of literacy. What better way than providing bookcases and books to those at the greatest risk -- pre-school children being reared in low-income families?

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim Davidson is a public speaker and syndicated columnist. You may contact him at 2 Bentley Drive, Conway, AR 72034. To begin a bookcase literacy project visit [www.bookcaseforeverychild.com](http://www.bookcaseforeverychild.com). You won't go wrong helping a needy child.)