One World, One Day: Increasing Literacy and Cultural Awareness

IN MARCH, APRIL AND MAY 2012, THE MSU College of Arts and Letters Community Language School offered a series of events at area libraries designed to increase literacy in English and expose children in K-5 to other languages and cultures. The project was based on the book “One World, One Day” by Barbara Kerley, which takes a look at the lives of children around the world, all in the course of a single day. From getting up and eating breakfast, to going to school, doing chores, and eating dinner with the family, children across the globe have many things in common. The details may be different, but the bigger picture can look strikingly similar in many ways.

Community Language School faculty, graduate students, and staff read the “One World, One Day” book with the children in English, and also watched a DVD of MSU international students and scholars reading translations of the book in their own languages. A small group of MSU students representing different cultures shared information about their home countries and answered questions about their home cultures.

The CLS community outreach program provided an engaging and exciting environment in which participating children could gain appreciation for other cultures while strengthening their literacy skills. Held at five local libraries including Charlotte, downtown Lansing, Grand Ledge, Haslett, and Mason, as well as the Detroit Public Library, the events were free of charge and required no registration. The first 30 families to arrive at each event received their own copy of the book to take home. The “One World, One Day” events were funded by a Phi Kappa Phi literacy grant, and were supported by “National Geographic” and the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University.