Literacy Project
KPMG donates books to support Refugee Family Literacy

By Clare S. Richie

Parents are their children’s first teachers, so their access to books is critical for building strong reading skills. And for a parent who is studying English as a new language, reading to their child can also help their literacy skills flourish.

That’s why KPMG Family for Literacy (KFFL) teamed up with the DeKalb Library Foundation (DLF) to give the gift of literacy this holiday season to refugee and immigrant families who participate in the Refugee Family Literacy Program (RFLP) in Clarkston. KPMG is the Downtown Atlanta-based business management and consulting firm.

“They donated more than 440 books and 20 winter coats for the children,” Jill Joplin, DLF Executive Director, shared. Familiar titles, like “500 Words to Grow On” and “Richard Scary’s Best Word Book Ever,” were carefully selected to benefit English language learners.

Since 2008, KFFL has distributed over 3.5 million new books to low-income children in 100-plus communities across the United States. This family effort of partners, employees, spouses, alumni, interns and more seeks to develop the next generation of young leaders through reading.

“KPMG is passionate about corporate citizenship, and dedicated to supporting the communities in which we live and work. KPMG’s Family for Literacy provides children from low-income families with their own new books — and in many cases, their very first book,” Paul Benedict, KPMG Senior Manager and DLF Board Member, said.

It’s a perfect gift for the participants at RFLP, refugee and immigrant parents who lack access to childcare but are intent on learning English. RFLP’s first location is walking distance to the Clarkston Library and serves 90 moms, ranging from pre-literate to educated and multi-lingual, and 110 children less than five years old.

“While moms learn English upstirs, their children are also engaged in early education — language, fine motor skills, social emotional learning — so they can hit the ground running with teachers and students in kindergarten,” RFLP Director Jennifer Green said.

At the end of the morning, moms and their children “come together for songs and activities to reinforce what they learned in class, and end with a parent reading to their child or engaging their child with a book,” Green said.

The foundation’s long relationship with RFLP made them the obvious recipient choice for the KFFL book donation. Once a month, RFLP accompanies parents to the Clarkston Library to make sure parents have a library card, introduce to them to staff, show them ELL resources and children’s books, and promote story time.

DeKalb County Library employees visit RFLP’s location to help with activities during parent/child time.

Last year, library employees volunteered for a service project to transform an RFLP classroom into a library. They’re eager to do a similar project at RFLP’s recently opened second location.

“They’re great partners — we’re so fortunate to have them,” Green said.

That was evident at the Clarkston Family Read Along on Nov. 17, as refugee families received books from KFFL at the Clarkston Library. Families were given a book bag to decorate with their children along with free books to take home. KFFL volunteers who attended pitched in with the crafts and read with the families.

“We have such gratitude for both KPMG and DLF. The library is a beautiful place where many different people from different backgrounds have access to resources. I love that our parents have access to that and now books to keep at home,” Green said.