

The Kiwanis Club of Elyria is pleased to announce that its Signature Project, the READ|WRITE|RIDE Third Grade Book Report Contest, has returned bigger and better in 2024.

READ|WRITE|RIDE is a collaboration between the Kiwanis Club of Elyria and the Elyria City School District to promote literacy skills. As part of their fourth-quarter curriculum, third grade students began in early March to read a book and write a book report under the guidance of their teachers. The reports are prepared to align with state standards for Language Arts. The teachers select three finalists from each third-grade class to present their report and an oral summary to Kiwanis judges, who use a ballot prepared to mirror the standards. The top winner from each class receives a 24" youth mountain bike and a bicycle helmet from the Kiwanis Club of Elyria.

This year, there are over 400 students in 21 third grade classrooms participating. Every student receives a certificate of participation, with all who advance to the presentation stage receiving a certificate and prizes. Our thanks go to Jason Kacsay, Teaching and Learning Coordinator with the Elyria City Schools, who coordinates the ESD end of things.

Kiwanis begins its preparations annually in January, ordering, receiving and assembling the bicycles. Our thanks go to Kiwanis member Steve Kaplan, who provides warehouse space for this project. This year, we reached out to club members, volunteers and the Elyria Bike Shop to assist our assembly chief, Kiwanis member Steve Sump, in making sure that all 21 bicycles are safely assembled and delivered to the schools for presentation at their assemblies.

Lyn Crouse, current President of the Kiwanis Club of Elyria, took over chairing the longtime annual project when it returned from a COVID hiatus. Crouse, the retired Executive Director of the Elyria Public Library System, said: "It was a fit because it's reading, but honestly, organizing paperwork and people, collaborating with community partners, recruiting and assigning volunteers, budgeting, ordering inventory, and grant writing aligned with my administrative background. I was never a children's librarian, but when I judged the presentations and saw how excited the kids were to talk about their books, then attended the assemblies, and saw how the winners were cheered for by their classmates – great job, ECSD! - I realized that this contest is an enjoyable way to encourage kids to read and write."

In 2022, the club awarded 5 bicycles, one per school. Last year, it increased to 10 bicycles, thanks to continued financial support from Elyria Charities. This year, the club applied for and received a grant from the Ohio District Kiwanis Foundation in the amount of \$2500 + 25 bike helmets, so in 2024, we will award bicycles to all three finalists in each class, for a total of 21.

In addition, READ|WRITE|RIDE was selected from among seventeen entries as the Ohio Kiwanis Signature Project Winner for its creative way to engage children in reading and promote literacy in our community. The project will advance to the Kiwanis International competition and be recognized at its July International Conference in Denver.



Past winner with Lyn and Scott



Past winner with Rachel Speidel from Elyria Charities, Lyn and Cindy



This year's bikes