

## Helping the Environment and Children, One Book at a Time

Submitted by Heather O'Donnell

Our local schools are saving thousands of books from the landfill by donating them to Books for the Barrios, a Concord charity organization that builds school libraries in the Philippines. Alberta Falcone, the textbook coordinator for the Moraga School District, has been donating to Books for the Barrios for many years. "Over the years, the Moraga School District has donated thousands of used textbooks and library books to Books for the Barrios. Just this past May, close to 4 pallets of textbooks were delivered to them with probably another 4 pallets ready to be delivered in September." Lafayette School District has donated used textbooks, pilot teaching materials, DVDs and workbooks to Books for the Barrios. "Whenever the district approves a new curriculum, many companies send pilot materials to us in hopes that we select their texts for the new program. Next year, we will be donating Science materials." Sandy Campbell, district coordinator, said. Orinda schools also donate materials to Books for the Barrios, according to Carolyn Maxwell, who coordinates the program for the Orinda School District.

Frank Jackson, a former Moraga School District

parent, picks up the used books from the schools and delivers them to Books for the Barrios. He has been the delivery person for Lamorinda schools' library books and textbooks for the past ten years. He got involved in the program because he was an American Airlines pilot with Dan Harrington, co-founder of the charity. "Frank is always willing to pick up the books and take them to our Concord warehouse," says Nancy Harrington, the co-founder, President and Executive Director of Books for the Barrios.

Nancy Harrington and Dan, her husband, started Books for the Barrios twenty years ago after they were stationed in the Philippines in the Navy. The local schools were filled with children that wanted to learn but didn't have any children's books for them to read. Nancy and Dan used their local expertise in the Philippines to partner with government authorities to build school libraries in the remotest islands by sending used children's books from the U.S. Every year, Books for the Barrios diverts over 300,000 pounds of books and materials that otherwise would be sent to landfills.

Besides collecting used textbooks, Books for the Barrios also has field trips

for school children, scout troops and even birthday parties for kids to learn about children in the Philippines who are just like them and about the importance of re-using and recycling. As part of the experience the children bring their own used books to the warehouse, pack them into boxes, decorate the outside of the boxes that will become the Filipino children's desk, and then load them onto pallets. While having a traditional snack of dried mangos and pineapple juice, the children watch a slide show about daily school life in the Philippines. Harrington introduces herself with the traditional Filipino greeting and then shows them homemade dolls and toys that Filipino children have made. Nancy teaches the children a Filipino folk song and one lucky singer will even get to hold an authentic vacual or hand-made umbrella. "I learned that the Philippines need more books, so me and my class boxed some books for the Philippines. I feel happy that we are helping the Philippines to have more of the things that we have," said a visiting fifth grader. For more information on the Books for the Barrios, the website is [booksforthebarrios.com](http://booksforthebarrios.com).

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