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Power of the Printed Word

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THE POWER OF THE PRINTED WORD

The status of reading in the country is the topic of many negative minded commentators. What they are saying is that adults merely buy a lot of books but don't read them. Surveys and questionnaires indicate to scholars of our society that people find reading too difficult to tackle, and accept the less challenging time-passer, television.

It becomes the duty of some of us, then, to report the positive side of the ledger whenever we can. There are myriad signs that we read carefully, completely, and with comprehension, wherever safety, economy, and/or welfare are in the balance. Watch what the inflationary prices are doing to family shoppers now. You will find adults and their children doing daily vocabulary drills and computational exercises in the supermarkets. "What does *no additives* mean?" "What do they mean by *inert*?" "Is 59c for eight ounces more expensive than \$1.13 for a pound?"

Everywhere you look, you may find signs that give hope for the reading generation coming along. Did you read about the wonderful comeback of Rexburg, Idaho, after the devastating flood? Sixty Reading Councils, chapters of the International Reading Association, contributed books to restock the Rexburg Library. This is an act of recognition of the importance of books in our daily lives, just as other agencies rush to aid with food and shelter.

What is so important for parents to realize is that any kind of reading a child does is creative in nature, adding to and enriching the stock of experiences that gives future reading more meaning. When little children stop at the book and magazine rack in supermarkets, it may be as helpful for them to see words and figures, pictures and ideas, as to ride in cars across the country on a family trip.

We need to pull ourselves from under the blanket of pessimism about the printed word that movies and television writers throw over us. We have to see written communication as having a potential greater than our wildest dreams - much more than pictures can convey, because pictures are mere impressions in the mind. Words are tools with which we may shape thoughts, logic, ideas. And ideas can accomplish wonderful things.

One of those wonderful things resulted from creative communication just a few days ago, on the local scene. Meals-on-Wheels, a service in which volunteers deliver a hot meal a day to Senior Citizens, and the Bookmobile service are working out plans to deliver requested books along with hot meals. Large print books are becoming more plentiful, and that too may help make books more used and usable to the older generations.

Adults who use reading skills for learning directions, information, recreation, guidance and participation, were taught these rewards of reading by dedicated teachers. Teachers are forces of influence, and set

powerful examples in the minds of students, even though they cannot immediately view the results of their work. If each adult who reads well today were able to trace the ability to its source, the chances are nine-in-ten that an enthusiastic teacher brought that reading skill to its point of independence

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Editor