

The University of Kansas

William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications

To: emailaddress@xxx.

Subject: KU Students for Childhood Literacy

University of Kansas News Release

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Annual Collegiate Literacy Champions Award

LAWRENCE, Kansas – A student group at KU, [Students for Childhood Literacy](#), won the national 2021 Collegiate Literacy Champions award at ALLC’s national convention on Tuesday, June 29, in Commerce City, Colorado.

The award has been given to only one college or university group every year since 1948, the year of [ALLC](#)’s founding. According to ALLC, “The annual Collegiate Literacy Champions award honors significant contributions to the improvement of children’s reading skills.” There were forty-seven entries in this year’s Collegiate Literacy Champions competition, student organizations from colleges and universities in 31 states submitted entries.

Students for Childhood Literacy began at the University of Kansas in 2016. Before this year, it had just held fundraisers to help grade-school children buy books at school book fairs. The group has 21 members, ranging from freshmen to seniors. [Susanne Andersen](#), President of Students for Childhood Literacy, is a senior from Weslaco, Texas. Associate Prof. [Robert Raven](#), in the English Department at KU, assists as the faculty adviser.

This is the first year that Students for Childhood Literacy has worked with students at Heath Elementary in Lawrence. The program lasted eight weeks throughout January and February of 2021, where members worked with 12 fourth-grade students and their teacher, Jane Jones. “These 12 fourth-graders are now reading at an eighth-grade level, before they were, on average, reading at a second-grade level. I love KU Students for Childhood Literacy,” said Jones, via email.

During the 8-week program, members of Students for Childhood Literacy posted a [weekly multimedia blog](#) (text, photos, video) documenting progress. They had permission from the students, the students’ parents, and Heath Elementary School to do so. “This was the greatest experience of my life. I have a library card now and the Lawrence Public Library wants me to make videos about the books I’m reading. I want to turn books into movies when I grow up,” said Nadia Sanchez, a student at Heath Elementary, via text interview.

At the ceremony on Tuesday, the group was awarded a commemorative plaque and a one thousand dollar grant. The winning entry was titled [Books Alive](#). It is a series of twelve 60-second videos. Each student did a voiceover for his or her own drawings based on a book that

the student read. Members of Students for Childhood Literacy helped the students read the books, create drawings, prepare scripts, and produce the videos. Both the videos and blog posts can be accessed through the [Heath Elementary School website](#).

“I couldn’t be more proud of our group, this is the first award we’ve ever won. But our biggest thrill is knowing that we’ve helped instill a love of reading in twelve very smart fourth-graders,” said Andersen in a phone interview.

Students for Childhood Literacy still does fundraisers four times a year by hosting used-book sales in front of Wescoe Hall.

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