

# Tahoe book program earns Girl Scouts award



Molly Winslow, from left, Erika Strain and Mackenzie Nealis set up bookshelves with free books. Photo/Provided

Three South Tahoe Girl Scouts, Molly Winslow, Erika Strain, and Mackenzie Nealis, are continuing their work after earning the silver award. They have created a program for kids and adults to be able to read books while they wash their clothes at four local Laundromats.

The idea was inspired by the “libromats” (laundromat + library) of Cape Town, South Africa, featured on a 2015 National Public Radio broadcast. Girls spent many hours each day washing clothes by hand with a washboard. With donated money, washing machines and books were donated to wash their clothes and books were made available for the mothers to read to their children while their clothes were getting clean.

Studies have shown that a home library can have the single greatest impact on a child’s education. Home libraries matter

even more than money in predicting a child's success in school. Many studies have shown that poorer communities have fewer books per household than wealthier communities. In one study, a neighborhood in Washington, D.C., where 61 percent of the children lived in poverty, there was on average only one book for every 830 children.

With donated bookshelves and books from the former St. Theresa's School and the local community, the Tahoe girls have stocked almost 800 books to date. The bookshelves are located at Al Tahoe Laundry, High Sierra Laundry, Town & Country Laundromat, and Tahoe Keys Laundromat. The hope is that parents will spend time reading to their young children and older children can spend time reading on their own.

If someone really likes the book, it's OK to take it home.

Although their Girl Scout silver award requirements have been met, the girls are committed to keeping the bookshelves stocked with books and of making this an ongoing community effort. To donate new or gently used children's books, in English or Spanish, drop them off at St. Theresa Catholic School, 1041 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe