

Brothers spread love of reading

By SUSAN WINLOW
DAILY REPUBLIC

FAIRFIELD — The after-school routine for many teens consists of rummaging through the refrigerator for a snack and then popping in the latest video game or switching on the TV.

Brady and Kyle Baldwin, both students at Armi-jo High School, would rather kick back with a book. Kyle, 16, searches out a fantasy or science fiction book and his brother,

Brady, 13, reads anything nonfiction.

It's that love of books that propelled them into the nonprofit business world at such a young age. Both boys started a company in February called My Own Book that provides books to low-income children through area schools.

The program took off this summer at Bransford Elementary School where the bulk of the books have been distributed so far.

See Reading, Back Page



Zachary Kaufman/Daily Republic

Brady Baldwin, 13, and Kyle Baldwin, 16, started a non-profit earlier this year that collects books for underprivileged children.

A8 Friday, September 29, 2006 — DAILY REPUBLIC

Reading: More than 200 books donated this summer

From Page One

Bransford will again receive the books, given out about three times a year, as will area schools such as Anna Kyle Elementary School and Sullivan Middle School, which is looking forward to receiving some World Book Encyclopedias.

The brothers donated between 200 and 250 new books to kindergarten, second and third grade classes this summer at Bransford, a year-round school, much to the excitement and surprise of the children.

"The kids are really shocked that we would do this," Kyle said.

The business is truly hands-on for the Baldwin brothers. The boys read a story to the class, encourage the students to get library cards and then distribute a new book to each child.

"We just really want to spread the joy of reading to other people," Kyle said. "We've had books our whole lives and we want to help out locally."

Bransford's principal, Jus-

How you can help

- Donate new children's books geared for kindergarten through third grade
- Give legal help in filing form 501(c)(3) so My Own Book can become an official nonprofit organization
- Contact: kyle@myownbook.net or brady@myownbook.net, or call 864-4046
- Visit: www.myownbook.net

tine Turner, is pleased her school is a recipient of the program.

"Our population doesn't have a large number of books in the home," she said. "The kids are excited about it (and) that's what counts."

It shocked both Brady and Kyle to learn how many students have never owned a book. And through other community book drives they learned the importance of exposing children early to reading.

"We discovered that once they get above a certain age and

haven't been exposed they're not interested," Brady said.

The My Own Book project started with Kyle's 4-H project. They built bookshelves, donated books to Child Haven in Fairfield and recorded some books on tapes for the pediatric ward at NorthBay Medical Center.

"We really liked doing it so we decided we wanted to do it more," Kyle said. "Besides, the kids really need it."

Before the program could launch, however, Kyle and Brady needed books. Not afraid to ask questions they sought out answers such as how to get the books and how best to distribute them. In their quest for answers they gained some valuable contacts, including State Superintendent Jack O'Connell, who happened to sit next to them on a recent plane flight.

The Reading Tree in San Francisco, a division of First Book, donated 360 books and The Storyteller in Lafayette donated 300 books. The brothers have also secured grants including a recent \$1,000 grant

secured through Youth Service America.

But the hunt for books goes on.

That's the only thing that holds us up, Brady said.

They write letters to publishers and major booksellers. They ask to speak to major groups such as Daughters of the American Revolution. In addition, this fall they are selling pumpkins. All the proceeds will go to purchasing new books.

The duo plans to give out a total of 720 books by the end of the school year. They're also learning the ins and outs of becoming a nonprofit organization and as soon as that status is earned, more grants will become available to them.

For administrators such as Turner, the service supplied by the Baldwin brothers is invaluable.

"For them to just be able to put a book in a kid's hand, it's really a gift to us," she said.

Reach Susan Winlow at 427-6955 or swinlow@dailyrepublic.net.