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IN NEWS

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The children sat in a half-circle. Some listened intently while others eagerly flipped through the pages of the book on their laps. One Cal State Fullerton student asked the children what animal was on the cover of the book. The dulcet sounds of children's voices filled the air.

"Unicorn!" one child said.

"Horse!" another said.

"No, it's a bull," said one young boy.

Fifty-four CSUF students joined forces with Jumpstart, a program dedicated to building literacy, language and social skills in young children, to promote Read for the Record, a national campaign created to encourage children across the country to read the same book on the same day. This year the book was "The Story of Ferdinand," by Munro Leaf.

The short-term goal is to beat last year's record and get more than 150,000 children to read. The long-term goal is "to make sure every child succeeds," said Casey Towner, 18, a child and adolescent studies major and Jumpstart volunteer coordinator.

At 4 p.m. students gathered in the office of the CSUF Children's Center to sign in with their groups and pick up their matching red shirts. The students sorted into three different rooms: the Garden room, the Rainbow room and the Sunshine room.

Shouts of, "I want a book," filled the air in the Sunshine room as the children pulled out stacks of books. Books were then dispersed to children for them to keep.

With the turn of every page, the reader would ask the children questions and they would voice their thoughts.

In the Rainbow Room, two students read the story; one in Spanish and one in English. In the Garden Room, the reader didn't need to comment on every page because the children did it for him. One young girl, concerned when the subject of bulls fighting arose, found relief when Ferdinand got to sit peacefully in his favorite patch of flowers by the end of the book. Another young girl decided to put the black and white pages of "Ferdinand" aside in exchange for the colored pages of "Dora the Explorer."

"I think it went great," Jo'ie D. Taylor, 28, Jumpstart program director for CSUF said.

Read for the Record is a nationwide event put on by Jumpstart. Jumpstart was founded at Yale University in 1993 and is now one of the fastest growing nonprofit organizations in the country. Its goal is to fix the problem of children, particularly from lower-income families, entering school

unprepared to learn. According to the Jumpstart Web site, 35 percent of American kindergarten children begin school unprepared and 50 percent of all children from low-income families start first grade up to two years behind their peers.

In an effort to change these statistics, Jumpstart pairs college students, called Corps members, with preschool children in one-on-one relationships for a whole school year. Throughout the year, the program initiates events like Read for the Record.

According to the Jumpstart Web site at jstart.org, last year's inaugural event also made history when 150,000 people read the same book on a single day at more than 1,500 local events across 47 states and raised \$500,000 through book sales and additional donations.

This year, group reading events were held across the country in elementary schools and high-schools, in colleges and universities, in community organizations and libraries, and at Toys "R" Us stores, Hyatt hotels, playgrounds, offices and homes.

CSUF students also went to Richman Elementary School in Fullerton, Gordon H. Beatty Elementary School in Buena Park and James A. Whitaker Elementary School in Buena Park.

When the story was over, the children gathered around tables covered with various arts and crafts paraphernalia. Students assisted the children in crafting horned headbands, hand puppets and flowers that rattled.

Then it was playtime.

The children put the final touches on their projects and went out to play. The group of children who made headbands put their horns on their heads and charged down the hall like a pack of bulls. Just like Ferdinand.