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The University of Dayton

News Release

Dec. 10, 1990
Contact: Dick Kubik

CHRISTMAS IS GOOD TIME TO READ TO CHILDREN, SAYS UD EDUCATOR

DAYTON, Ohio -- Christmas is an excellent time for parents to read to their children and instill in them a desire to read on their own, says a University of Dayton specialist in children's literature.

"Even children as young as a few months will experience warmth and gain from such contact, says Patricia Hart, assistant professor of teacher education."

Early exposure to books, with plenty of time for talk and enjoyment of the story, appear to be key factors in helping children acquire advanced skills in reading and writing, says Hart. She advises parents to set specific times for reading to children and to make it part of a regular routine.

"That's why I suggest Christmas as a good time for family reading. It's a fun time of the year for children, and reading can be made part of that fun. Of course, family reading should continue all through the year."

Hart also says that children's literature has changed greatly in the past decade or so.

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"The quality of children's literature has really improved. These newer books, which have a contemporary appeal, can be excellent starters for children. Later, if the parents wish, they can move on to the older classics," says Hart.

She also advises parents to read books that relate to their children's current experiences and interests.

"For example, if your children are studying the weather in school, read books about weather. If they're studying American history, read books about that. And so on."

Having quality books available in the home, either as library loaners or as family-owned volumes, is very important in helping children to enjoy reading.

"Local libraries are excellent sources, and I've found librarians to be very helpful," says Hart. "If parents are enthusiastic about books and reading, and if parents read books themselves, children will pick up on that and become readers on their own.

"Once parents have established a love of reading in their children, nothing can stop the children from learning," adds Hart. "There's no turning back on the reading skill. Once children have it, it's theirs to keep."

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For media interviews, contact Patricia Hart at (513) 229-3304.