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READING ROOM

LEARNING

No joking: Jester books inspire school kids
to read more than 300,000 pages

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TARA BUI

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. — Barbara Saltzman returned to Woodbury Elementary School, greeted by handmade banners and hundreds of smiling students. It had been only a month since her initial visit, but already the children had read 322,625 pages in an effort to provide copies of her son's book, "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle," along with Jester and Pharley dolls, to child patients at UC Irvine Medical Center.

With a grant from the Disney Cast Community Fund, Woodbury student reading helped to restock Jester and Pharley Smile Carts at the hospital. The cart, originally donated by Astra Zeneca, is a mobile activity center that includes a TV, VCR, boom box, books and toys. The top readers and classes also received special awards for their outstanding achievement.

Ariadna Gurrola, 9, was the top reader in the third grade, having finished nearly 12,000 pages. To her and to some of her class-

mates, there's nothing better than a good book.

"I read books in my house, on shelves, and in my bedroom," she said. "My favorite was this one that had a wizard who screamed like a girl if you touched him."

Mary Beth Lai, 8, is a fan of many titles, including the Jester, written by David Saltzman.

"I read a lot of books at home. If I see a word I don't understand, I reread or look at illustrations to try to find out. My favorite part of the Jester was when he drew a rainbow in the sky."

And to Mindy Huynh, 8, reading is a family affair.

"I read books from my brother's closet even though he's only 6. Every day, I read to him for 15 minutes. When I read to my brother, I will look up the word to teach him. I like to learn different words. I like it when a word sounds funny. My favorite book is 'Miss Mary Mack.'"



TURN ANOTHER PAGE: Students, including Mary Beth Lai and Mindy Huynh, vie to see who can read the most, gathering to hear the results at a school assembly featuring the jester book which launched the competition.