

SIUE makes impressive Guinness World Record attempt for "Longest Line of Books"

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SIUE - Southern Illinois University Edwardsville may soon be a Guinness World Record holder for “longest line of books!”

While results await official confirmation from Guinness Book of World Records, a remarkable effort was made on Friday, Sept. 8, International Literacy Day, as the campus and surrounding communities joined to create a path comprising 21,048 books stretching nearly three miles.

“Literacy is the great equalizer between all people,” said organizer Stephen Hupp, PhD, professor of psychology in the SIUE School of Education, Health and Human Behavior (SEHHB). “I can’t imagine much of a better cause than helping promote literacy not just in this community, but across the world.”

During a kickoff event held on campus, SEHNB Interim Dean Paul Rose, PhD, expressed his gratitude for everyone who played a role in the massive effort.

“This world record attempt is a beautiful representation of SIUE’s values,” Rose said. “To see armies of students gathered, reflecting on literacy and children’s needs, and using teamwork effectively to complete a monumental project like this makes our University proud. At SIUE, we believe in powerful learning experiences that engage the community and enhance the places that we live.”



“We worked in teams to set down the books, which had to be touching one another to qualify for the record attempt,” explained Leanna Kehl, a master’s candidate in the clinical child psychology program. “I’m a first-year graduate student here, so this has been a fun way to get to know more people while contributing to a good cause.”

A group of independent witnesses from the community, and professional land surveyors from Hutson & Associates, donated their time to conduct the official measurement and book count.

The majority of the books used for the “longest line of books” will be given to children in Head Start programs in East St. Louis, Cahokia, Caseyville and Belleville. The massive contribution will support Hupp’s ongoing [Kid Books Project](#), which aims to collect one million gently-used books for children in local Head Start programs, ages five years and younger.

“Over the years, we’ve been collecting books and sending one book home with every child in Head Start, but this year is going to be much bigger,” Hupp emphasized. “I’m confident we’ll be sending home at least five books with every child.”

Books will also be donated to the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the Greater St. Louis Book Fair and other fitting causes.

“It’s been a wonderful experience, because we know that these books are going to be donated to people who need them,” said Jessica Schultz, a senior psychology major and member of the SIUE Psychology Club.

“This has helped us engage with the community in ways I hadn’t imaged,” Hupp added. “I’ve spoken with people about potential new practicum sites for our students, as well as new outlets to which we could donate books or have them donated for our efforts.”

SIUE organizations helping coordinate the event included the SIUE Psychology Club, Psi Chi, the Head Start Social-Emotional Wellness team, and the Clinical Child and School Psychology graduate program.

Local organizations that provided large amounts of books to the effort included the Edwardsville Public Library, St. Mary’s Catholic School in Edwardsville, Liberty Middle School, St. Jacob Elementary, St. John Newman Church, St. Andrews Church, the Christian Activity Center, Tri-Township Public Library, Glen Carbon Library, and Afterwords Books.

[Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of more than 14,000.