

Elementary students receive customized book bags

By Scot E. Kirk
AFRO Staff Writer

A group of students at Ruth K. Webb Elementary, located in Northeast Washington, D.C., received a special treat last week when designer Stephen Deadwyler presented each with a custom-designed book bag containing, of course, a book.

The reading material included several books of poetry, one titled *In Daddy's Arms I am Tall*, which celebrates the relationship between fathers and sons. The students were also able to choose *Confetti*, which was designed to help children learn English as well as some Spanish words. For the girls, there was *My Steps*, a story about the playtime adventures of a girl and her friends.

The presentation was also an opportunity to see how students reacted to the materials. Each bag's design matched the cover of the book inside.

"It's been a blessing because we've gotten a tremendous response from the students and faculty," said Deadwyler, whose company, Wonderland Products, includes his brothers John and Wayne as business partners.

The students were almost unable to contain their excitement when Deadwyler asked which ones wanted to receive the book bags and book.



Stephen Deadwyler (left) and his brother and business partner John Deadwyler address students at Webb Elementary as Principal Donna Edwards and Carmela Webb, far right, look on. Webb is the daughter-in-law of Ruth K. Webb, for whom the school is named.

The staff at Ruth K. Webb Elementary agreed that the

presentation was a great idea. "I think it will be a great

opportunity for them to use the backpacks for other books that

they might want to put in there, and have an actual mobile

library," said Donna M.N. Edwards, principal of Webb Elementary.

The idea behind the presentation was to motivate students to read more and to promote a feeling of ownership and responsibility. The event, a collaboration between Wonderland Products; Heaven 1580-AM, owned by Infinity Broadcasting; and the Lillian Jones Youth Foundation, was the official kickoff for Webb's after-school reading program.

Infinity's Adopt-a-School initiative created a perfect synergy between the Lillian Jones Foundation and Wonderland, which hopes to expand the program to other schools in the future.

"I think today was great. I think it's the beginning of great relationship with the school and the students," said Deadwyler.

He said his design team wanted to feature the most engaging illustrations and stories to get the students attention and, hopefully, that would encourage them to read more.

"Anything we can do to get them to read is the goal. Even if we have to trick them into doing it," said Deadwyler.

"I think the presentation gave the students a different perspective on reading and it connected for them in real life what they do in school everyday," said Edwards.

Photos by Scot E. Kirk

Best new office building award for African-American architectural firm

Devroux & Purnell Architects received an award of excellence in the "Best New Office Building" category for their design of the Potomac Electric Power Co. (Pepco) headquarters in the heart of downtown Washington, D.C.

The recognition was bestowed by the Washington, D.C. Marketing Center at its Annual Meeting and Development Showcase. Mayor Anthony A. Williams, members of the D.C. City Council, D.C. leaders and members of the real estate

community participated in the Nov. 2 ceremony.

"We are extremely honored to receive this award," said Paul Devroux, founding partner of Devroux & Purnell. "The Pepco building embodies the heart and soul of one of the most rewarding

projects we have worked on in our company's history."

The 10-story, 384,000-square-foot office building features a rooftop deck with gardens that yield spectacular views of Washington's historic monuments and the Capitol.

The building, located near Chinatown, the National Portrait Gallery, the MCI Center and the Mies van der Rohe-designed Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, is the only building in the city's central business district designed by an African-American architectural firm.

A long-established firm, Devroux & Purnell has provided award-winning design services for more than 25 years. For more information on Devroux & Purnell Architects and their Pepco headquarters design, visit www.dp-architects.com.



Courtesy photo

Devroux & Purnell's Pepco headquarters near Chinatown, the only office building in D.C.'s central business district designed by an African-American architectural firm, won the Best New Office Building Award from the Washington, D.C. Marketing Center at its Nov. 2 meeting.

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