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Book Smart

- **Community outreach promotes literacy**
- **Guests are rewarded for involvement**



iteracy - the ability to read and write - is crucial to a child's development and sense of well-being. Children who are solid readers have a healthy self-image, perform better in school, and become lifelong learners. Today, experts estimate that nearly 40% of US 4th graders are not achieving basic levels of reading proficiency and nearly two-thirds of America's children living in poverty have no access to books at home.

In their second year, Hotel Sorella Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, KS, participated in the Book Smart promotion. The 2015 Kansas City promotion benefited the Bookmobile of Hands to Hearts, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to improving the lives of children everywhere. The Bookmobile is available to provide books to at-risk children within the metropolitan KC area, primarily serving within the KCK school district. In order to most effectively use resources, they seek partnerships with schools and organizations that are already working with these children. Bookmobile visits are pre-scheduled with community partners and are given out free of charge.

"This is our second year participating in the Book Smart promotion, and it is an important initiative for Hotel Sorella Country Club Plaza," said Dan Posch, director of sales and marketing. "We're part of this community and we want to give back to the city that's welcomed us with open arms. Making a difference in the lives of children seems to be a great way to accomplish that."

Last year, Hotel Sorella Country Club Plaza was able to provide a few hundred books and this year, they want to do more (the number of books donated in 2015 was not available at press time).

Eight years ago, Houston-based Valencia Group started the "Book Smart" program, which has resulted in the donation of almost 1,000 children's print and audio books to libraries, hospitals, and non-profit groups in communities served by their hotels.

The program, held this year from June 1, 2015, to August 31, 2015, rewards the support of overnight guests who donate a new



print or audio book – appropriate for kids up to middle school age. A new addition to the 2015 program allowed guests the opportunity to leave a monetary donation and the hotels purchased books on their behalf. As a thank you, guests enjoyed a credit for a complimentary adult beverage, including wine, beer, or a cocktail in several of the Valencia Group locations. Guests that participated at Hotel Sorella Country Club Plaza last year were treated to a complimentary flat-bread.

This year guests could donate in a number of ways – including making a donation at check-out at either the front desk or the restaurant. If guests gave a minimum donation of \$10 or a children's book, they were given a free signature cocktail at Bar Rosso, the restaurant/bar at the top floor of Hotel Sorella Country Club Plaza.

According to Roy Kretschmer, Executive Vice President of Operations for the Valencia Group, "It's been exciting to see Book Smart grow each year. We feel this is a fun and easy way to involve guests, thank our frequent visitors, and promote literacy while supporting key community organizations."

If you and your organization are giving back to your community, contact us today at Editor@MidwestMeetings.com! 