

FULL FRAME

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE MIRIELLO ('09M)





Gail ('84) and Fred Fox read with children at the One World exhibit at Harrisonburg's Explore More Discovery Museum. The Foxes championed the exhibit, which features children's books from 39 countries.

'Because children lead the way'

Gail and Fred Fox help literacy and diversity converge BY MARTHA BELL GRAHAM

Gail ('84M) and Fred Fox are passionate about literacy, diversity — and their community. That's why they've championed "One World," a popular exhibit in Harrisonburg's Explore More Discovery Museum. The exhibit, where literacy and diversity converge, features children's books from 39 countries.

Gail, who formerly taught reading and literacy in the JMU College of Education, and her husband Fred, a local orthopaedic surgeon, first proposed a permanent exhibit in 2010 to showcase their community's rich diversity through children's books.

The collection presents rich opportunities for international understanding, essential for student success in the city's schools. "It's the United Nations in every school here," says Gail, who after retiring from JMU became a literacy coach in Harrisonburg schools for "No Child Left Behind."

Harrisonburg City Public School division, one of Virginia's most diverse systems, enrolls students from 40 countries, representing 44 foreign languages. The division includes five elementary schools, where 105 students are bi-or multi-lingual.

"One World's" location within the museum brings literacy and diversity into a place where children are automatically drawn. "It says to children, 'You have a place here. Your culture is part of what is going on at Explore More,'" says Gail. She adds that children who might not otherwise have access to books are exposed to them at the museum. "It's a safe environment where they can come ... and say, 'Oh, that person looks like me!'"

The Foxes are encouraged that JMU has a deep connection to the Explore More Discovery Museum. The executive director is College of Education alumna Lisa Shull ('85, '91M), and the long list of JMU supporters includes alumni and student volunteers, staff members, and board members.

Impassioned advocates, Gail and Fred Fox regularly encourage friends to bring books back from their international travels. They hope this exhibit will encourage literacy and promote deeper cultural understanding throughout the community — and they believe it will, Gail says, "because children lead the way." ❧

→ READ MORE about Gail and Fred Fox at jmbethechange.wordpress.com

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