



## A love of reading on Valentine's Day



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Leonard Hurst and Ann Jackson on Monday read two books to children from the YMCA and Marion Day Care programs at the Sheridan Senior Center. The event was organized by the Sheridan branch of Raising Readers in Wyoming, which encourages parents to read to their young children by providing books through local doctors' offices as part of their well-child health care visits.

- Seniors read to local children at event organized by Raising Readers

**By Kristen Salamon**

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Valentines and the Cookie Monster highlighted reading selections at the Sheridan Senior Center on Monday morning as two seniors read books to children from the YMCA and Marion Day Care programs.

The reading was organized by Raising Readers in Wyoming, a statewide organization with a Sheridan office that encourages parents to read to their young children by providing new books as part of well-child health care visits.

"We wanted to let kids know that everybody reads," the organization's executive director, Jolene Olson, said Monday. "Grandmas and grandpas read. So every season, except for summer, we try to get together with folks at the senior center and local day cares to have our local seniors read a book or two."

Approximately 25 kids participated in yesterday's reading; full of energy and stories, the little ones fell quiet as soon as Leonard Hurst and Ann Jackson began reading the books chosen for the day.

"They love being read to," a YMCA child care supervisor said.

According to Olson, research has shown that when parents are given a "prescription" to read to their children by a doctor, they are four times more likely to read and share books with their children.

Olson added that national surveys have shown that only 39 percent of parents read or look at a picture book with their infants daily.

"It is very important for kids to begin reading early," she said.

Raising Readers in Wyoming provides age-appropriate books to children when they visit health care providers for their well-child visits at the ages of 2, 4, 6, 12, 15 and 18 months old as well as for 2-, 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds.

Olson said the program is funded primarily through donations and gifts from local foundations. In 2010, she said, Raising Readers in Sheridan gave out approximately 2,800 books.

For more information on Raising Readers in Wyoming, visit [www.raising-readersinwyoming.org](http://www.raising-readersinwyoming.org).