



Reader with a Cause:
JANE CRIST
Her charity:
Children's Book
Bank, Toronto

“Every child should have a library at home.”

Ever heard of a bookstore that gives you the books for free? At the Children's Book Bank (childrensbookbank.ca), a three-year-old Toronto charity that promotes literacy for children up to age 12, each child and parent who steps into the “store” gets to take home a book — to keep.

The charity's librarian, Jane Crist, had retired from teaching, but jumped at the chance to volunteer at the cozy book bank that serves the city's lower-income neighbourhoods. Kids take their time browsing, then settle on comfy couches to enjoy storytime, says Crist, who loves watching children choose the perfect book to read over and over at home.

In addition to stocking shelves with donations, helping to organize book drives and match kids with a book they'll enjoy, she runs literacy programs for nearby schools. “Classes come in, and I help the students find and then read titles that interest them,” Crist says.

The charity was the brainchild of Kim Beatty, a lawyer who left the rat race to spread her love of literature to disadvantaged kids. Since opening, the charity, which has close to 60 volunteers, has handed out approximately 120,000 books and averages about

300 giveaways per day. It has a long list of school and community donors, and always welcomes more. You can donate your kids' gently used books by dropping them off at the bank during business hours. “It's like Robin Hood, but the wealth we're sharing is reading,” Crist says.

Why she won: “The Children's Book Bank is such a simple idea but one that's making a real impact,” says *Today's Parent* editor-in-chief Caroline Connell.

What the money means: “This award will help fund the costs of renting our bookstore,” says Kim Beatty, founder of the Children's Book Bank. “And it will get us one step closer to our goal of expanding, so that more kids will have more books in their home libraries.”

— *Randi Chapnik Myers*

Jane wins a \$2,000 donation to the Children's Book Bank, from *Today's Parent* and KRG Children's Charitable Foundation.

We're relaunching *Today's Parent For Kids' Sake Awards!* Reader with a Cause nominations are now closed. Further details about the revamp coming soon!