



News Release:

Article released courtesy of Erin Place, *The Palladium Times*

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Caption: Members of the Oswego community gathered recently for the launch of the first-ever Community Read project showcasing Greg Mortenson's book "Three Cups of Tea." The "Oswego Reads" initiative includes residents of all ages reading one of the three versions of Mortenson's book, a variety of events related to the book throughout the year, and the culmination of Mortenson visiting Oswego to speak on October 28th about his book, and the Pennies for Peace campaign that helps build schools in Pakistan. Shown pictured from left to right in the back row are: Pathfinder Bank Senior Vice President/Chief Financial Officer James Dowd; Oswego City School District Superintendent Bill Crist; OCSD Sixth grade student Calista Lloyd; SUNY Oswego President Deborah Stanley; SUNY Oswego Student Association President Christina Ballesteros; Oswego City School District Director of Literacy Laura Ryder; and the river's end bookstore owner Bill Reilly. Front row left to right are: OCSD Kindergarten student Neil Roman; OCSD Second grade student Julia Roman; and OCSD First grade student Spencer Stepien.

Oswego Reads Project To Showcase Author Greg Mortenson's "Three Cups of Tea"

Mortenson Scheduled to Speak in Oswego in October

OSWEGO, New York (March 1, 2010) - Oswego has launched a new program that the entire city can participate in — the Port City's first-ever Community Read project with Greg Mortenson's book "Three Cups of Tea."

This project includes residents all of ages reading one of the three versions of Mortenson's book, a plethora of events related to the book throughout the year and the

culmination of Mortenson visiting Oswego to speak on October 28th about his book and the Pennies for Peace campaign that helps build schools in Pakistan.

The project has been in the works for a while now after Superintendent of Oswego Schools Bill Crist stumbled upon the project two years ago. During the summer, he was on his way to a conference when he drove past a library sporting a Community Read sign.



“I came back and immediately told the river’s end bookstore owner Bill Reilly about it,” Crist said. “I just thought Community Read would be a fantastic program for our school district, for our city.” After speaking with Reilly, Crist found out there was a similar project on a smaller scale already taking place between the river’s end and the high school.

After recruiting Reilly, the superintendent got his Director of Literacy, Laura Ryder, on board with the project. “We started a committee now comprised of 25-plus people from the Oswego City School District, SUNY Oswego and the community,” Ryder said. It was Ryder who chose the book for the project after she attended a conference.

“I heard Greg Mortenson speak and I thought this was the perfect book for children, teens and adults,” she said. “It is wonderful to be part of something in the community.”

Crist agreed. “To have everybody in the city, the school district and the college reading a book with a like theme and coming away with a similar message is wonderful,” he said. “The whole concept of doing good for others, while understanding the value of education and literacy.”

The superintendent explained that the book was written after Mortenson had traveled to Pakistan to climb the world’s second highest peak, K2. The author was injured while climbing the mountain and stayed for a while in a mountain community while he recuperated. During that time, he discovered that there was not a school in that community; in fact, there were not a lot of schools in Pakistan. This is what drove him to write his three books, the adult, teen and children’s version, and why he founded the Pennies for Peace campaign, which helps build schools in the Central Asian countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ryder noted that two SUNY Oswego graduate students have created a Web site for the Community Read project, www.oswegoreads.com, and it will serve as a resource for information specific to the project and community events.

“The events as they unfold will be posted on the website,” Ryder said. “We will be blogging to let everyone know what is going on.”

A wide variety of events are planned to coincide with the reading of the book. Crist said events are being planned at multiple venues at a variety of dates and times that will be announced shortly.

Some of the events include mountain climbing experts giving presentations to communicate their stories and supplementing it with slides; tea tastings; children’s plays performed by the Oswego Children’s Theater about the subject; lectures from a SUNY

Oswego professor, who is from Pakistan, about the culture of the country; and as previously mentioned, Mortenson speaking to the greater Oswego community.

“Everyone should stay tuned,” Ryder advised. “There will be a lot of exciting things happening with regard to Oswego Reads, and it will culminate with a great event at the Campus Center at SUNY Oswego with Greg Mortenson on October 28th.”

Crist offered special thanks to Pathfinder Bank and president, Thomas Schneider, for supporting the concept by providing necessary capital for an Oswego visit by the author, Greg Mortenson.

“Pathfinder Bank continues to be an important part of the fiber of this community,” he said. “When we went to Tom, he was immediately receptive to the idea of a community read and the impact of having the author visit Oswego. We are extremely pleased and thankful for this important financial commitment to this community-wide effort.”

In fact, most of the organizations in the community are on board with this project. Some of them include Oswego Health, local small businesses, the Greater Oswego-Fulton Chamber of Commerce, the YMCA, the Oswego Public Library, *The Palladium-Times*, and each of the educational institutions in the city.

“The enthusiasm throughout the community is greater than I have ever seen for something like this,” Reilly said. “Almost every organization in our community has stepped up and said they want to be a part of this.”

“This community effort has been very impressive and rewarding,” Crist agreed. “It’s something that has been really exciting for us as plans begin to take off — it has really blossomed into something positive.”

Reilly also noted that 20 percent of every copy of Three Cups of Tea sold at the river's end bookstore would be donated to the Pennies for Peace campaign.