

## Book Bags for Babies

New mothers at St. Luke Community Hospital in Ronan will have an early start on reading to their newborns thanks to the Upsilon Chapter of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International of Polson. For the eleventh year, the honorary society has hand-stitched book bags for new babies at the two hospitals in Lake County and filled them with primary books so that mom will have something to read to their child.

“It’s never too early to begin reading to a child, because even before children have a language for reference, they enjoy the sound of a loving, caring voice talking to or reading to them,” according to Billie Collins, who heads up the project for the Upsilon Chapter.



Three years ago, Marsha Anson, outreach coordinator for the Polson School District, developed a DVD video designed to encourage parents to read to their child.

Collins, who has been involved in the project from the very beginning, says that through the support of the Polson school district those DVDs go to the babies born at St. Joseph Medical Center in Polson.

The honorary society is made up of forty-three women who are or have been involved in education, including school nurses, librarians and anyone involved in the teaching profession. The local chapter has put together over a thousand bags of children's books for new mothers who have delivered in both hospitals in Lake County over the past eleven years.

Collins says the goal of the project is to encourage mothers to begin reading to their babies now and to make it a daily practice. From there, the child will be encouraged to read on its own.

“And, the more a child reads, the more proficient the child becomes which translates into better school performance,” according to Collins.

Delta Kappa Gamma Society International of Polson expresses thanks to Steve Lozar of Total Screen Design of Polson for donating the silk-screening on the front of the bags that are hand-sewn from scratch by society members. Collins adds that Wal-Mart of Polson gives the group a “huge discount” on material for the bags. Anyone who would like to help the chapter with new or what they call “friendly, used” books is encouraged to do so.

In 2008 313 babies were born at the two hospitals in Lake County. That number is 13 fewer than the 326 deliveries in 2007.