

## WSU News

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# Wu Crew Reads promotes literacy at Wichita school

By Sara Ornelas, Marketing Content Developer



First gentleman Rick Case is one of the volunteers for Wu Crew Reads, a pilot program between Wichita State University and Gordon Parks Elementary School. Members of the Wichita State community spend 20 minutes every week reading to and with third-graders via a virtual platform.

Shocker Nation is taking the university's mission of "being an educational driver" to heart through an outreach initiative aimed at the growing literacy rate among area elementary schoolchildren.

[Wu Crew Reads](#) is a pilot program between Wichita State University and Gordon Parks Elementary School. Members of the Wichita State community spend 20 minutes every week reading to and with third-graders via a virtual platform.

The program officially kicks off Sept. 13 with a black-and-yellow pep rally at Gordon Parks that will include a visit from Wichita State mascot, WuShock.

"Part of [Wichita State's mission](#) is to be an essential driver of education for Kansas," said Dr. Kaye Monk-Morgan, vice president for strategic engagement and planning. "Serving the young people in the community is not only mission-aligned, it's mission-centric. Kids can't pursue dreams without the ability to read. They can't go into the workforce or come to college without the essential skills needed for success. Wichita State is committed to partnering with Wichita Public Schools to help student dreams come true."

Monk-Morgan is one of about 20 volunteers with Wu Crew Reads.

"I've chosen to participate in this university initiative because of the potential impact for the students and their families, our school district and the university. My children benefited from volunteer readers during their elementary school experience. The opportunity to do for some mom what another person did for me and my children is a gift," she said.

WSU first gentleman Rick Case is volunteering and has been named the official champion of the Wu Crew Reads program.

"Not only is this program important in encouraging early literacy efforts, but it's also an opportunity for Shocker Nation to serve the people of our community," Case said. "I'm excited to be part of the part of this. If I can help one child be successful, then I will have made a difference."

Dr. Kimberly Engber, dean of the Dorothy and Bill Cohen Honors College, sees Wu Crew as an opportunity for engagement.

"We can get so buried in our campus community and all the daily things we do to maintain it that we forget we have the opportunity to invite more people into that community, in ways that are meaningful to them. I don't mean recruitment. I mean doing things that make us part of our community," she said.

Books can also be a passport for students to experience a world beyond their own lives.

"I have always loved to read," Engber said. "Who doesn't like to share what they love and hope to inspire that same feeling for someone else? It's a cliché but reading when I was a kid introduced me to new worlds, new possibilities. And it isn't only a separate world. It's what bound me to my earliest friends.

We got to know each other through the characters we knew in books. We acted out our favorite stories and figured out life together that way.”

Anahy Alvarez, a senior criminal justice student from New Mexico, joined the Wu Crew as a way of connecting to her new community in Wichita.

“I decided to join the Wu Crew to get involved and connect with my new home. I feel like having students doing this can influence kids to do the same when they get older,” she said.

Wu Crew Reads aims to have about 40 volunteers and is actively recruiting Wichita State students, staff, faculty, and alumni. To be a part of the program, click on the link below.

[Volunteer for Wu Crew Reads](#)