

## Thanks to Scouts, reading is in the bag

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A simple idea is becoming a reality thanks to two senior Fergus Falls Girl Scout troops and a local business.

Mike Evavold, Title 1 teacher in the Fergus Falls School District, knows how much time children typically spend in the family car, and he wanted to find a way to put that time to good use. His idea was to create tote bags that students could fill with books, math games and other educational materials.

He suggested the idea at a Title 1 parent advisory committee, he said, "and parent representative Jean Wiersma took it from there." Wiersma shared the idea with her daughter's Girl Scout troop leaders Jona Brown and Jan Dumas, who organized the girls into action last fall.

Over the course of several months, Troop 360 members Breanna Stout and Jessica Wiersma and Troop 384 members Kellie Carroll, Samantha Tiffany and Morgan Turner cut and stitched 162 bags.

Brown says it was one of the troops' bigger projects. The girls, using borrowed sewing machines, met at the Methodist church about 10 times for 90 minutes each time, plus spent additional time sewing at home.

Members of the troops continually seek ways to serve the community as they earn patches through Scouting. This project allowed the troops to earn the 'Reading Interest' patch.

The young students who receive a tote bag will also be given a free book donated by Biffley's and Book Mark. The bags will be shared with students in grades K-3 who participate in Title 1, a federally funded program designed to provide additional support in reading and math.

"I am very proud of these young ladies and excited about the potential of this project," Evavold says. "My desire is that we find ways to keep books available and within easy reach."

