



Homeless children welcome new library at Monarch School

\$40,000 renovation adds books, checkout system

BY CHRIS MORAN
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DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO — San Diego's 21-year-old school for homeless children opened its first true [library](#) yesterday.

The Monarch School in Little Italy had a small collection of about 2,500 books in a conference room, but the books were not available for checkout because there was no system to keep track of them.

School reading specialist Stacy Bermingham said it's particularly important for Monarch's students to have a place on campus to check out books because they can't get a city library card without an address.

With \$40,000 in donations, Monarch renovated the conference room with new shelves and added 4,000 new books and a computerized checkout system that also allows students to create reading lists, put items on hold and blog about what they've read.

A few more than 100 second-through 12th-graders attend Monarch. The school specializes in homeless or at-risk children, and it provides after-school programs, medical and dental care, food and clothing, and public transit passes.

Bermingham said the library project is another of Monarch's initiatives to foster interest in reading among its students. It has also hosted visits from popular children's authors. [P.C. Cast](#) and [Kristin Cast](#), authors of the best-selling series "House of Night," visited in March. Other visitors to Monarch include "Nightmare Academy" series author [Dean Lorey](#); "Pendragon" series author [D.J. MacHale](#); and [Janell Cannon](#), author of "Stellaluna."

Monarch held a ceremonial opening for its library yesterday during which the school's part-time librarian familiarized the students with the collection.

A joint project of the San Diego County Office of Education and the nonprofit Monarch School Project, The Monarch School first opened in 1988 as The PLACE, an acronym for Progressive Learning Alternative for Children's Education. It was staffed then with just one teacher, Sandra McBrayer, who went on to become the [national Teacher of the Year](#) in 1994.

The PLACE was renamed The Monarch School by students in 1998.

The library needs volunteers and more books. To donate bookstore gift cards or money to the library or other Monarch School projects, contact Paula Kelly, vice president of development, at (619) 685-8242, ext. 227 or at pkelly@monarchschoools.org , or go to monarchschoools.org.

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