

Dumbledore's Reading Army

By Maggie Wells

Two Langston Hughes Middle School 8th graders, Ariana Inamdar and Zoë Denkenberger, have started an army in Reston. Dumbledore's Reading Army (DRA), a student-led community program helps elementary school students learn to love reading, middle school students fulfill their volunteer hours, and teachers gain a little extra time in their day.

Co-founder Ariana says, "We came up with this idea because reading is important to us, and we wanted to make sure every student gets the opportunity and help they need to develop this important skill."

Ariana and Zoë work with the community to accomplish their mission. They coordinate with school principals, teachers, students, front office staff, and even bus drivers regularly. They happily spend two to three hours a week on DRA, in addition to their respective sports, studies, and other activities, because they believe in their program and have seen its impact on the community.

How does Dumbledore's Reading Army work?

Each middle school volunteer typically volunteers once a week and spends 20-30 minutes with

a K-1 reader. During their session, the younger student reads two books and reviews flash cards with the volunteer. The middle school student then reads one to two books chosen by the elementary student. In just one hour, each middle school student can positively impact two or three K-1 students and one K-1 teacher.

"When we go into the classrooms, many students stand up and run towards us. Knowing that they want to read with us and look forward to it makes this program especially worthwhile," explains Ariana. The girls track their impact quantitatively as well. Since DRA's inception in February 2019, there has been an average of 10 volunteers per week, 146 K-1 students have been helped, and 81 service hours have been fulfilled by middle school students.

Co-founders Ariana and Zoë see Dumbledore's Reading Army as lasting in the community. Zoë says, "In the future, I hope that this project will expand to other elementary schools in Fairfax County and give more opportunities to middle school and high schoolers as well."

Ariana and Zoe will continue DRA with LHMS and HWES in the 2019-20 school year, leading it from SLHS since it's literally next door to LHMS. They hope this article will encourage other LHMS students and/or school principals to contact them so they can spread the program and 'build the army' of volunteers and DRA coordinators.



Ariana
Inamdar

Zoë
Denkenberger