



Knox Elementary School librarian Tracy Woods, center, looks on as students dig through a pile of newly donated books Tuesday morning. (Jay Sowers | Times-Journal)

## **Area elementary schools receive donated books Tuesday**

Children at Knox Elementary and Cedar Park Elementary can no longer say they are tired of picking up the same books from their school libraries after the two schools received some 1,500 donated books Tuesday morning.

Lucas Blankenship, planner and economic development specialist with the University of Alabama's Center for Economic Development said the donations made through UACED's Books for the Blackbelt program are the organization's attempt to battle illiteracy in the region.

"We feel that education is the cornerstone for economic development within the state, so we are trying to build a foundation," Blankenship said. "We start with these children and we grow from there."

Bob Weber, a research assistant with UACED, said Tuesday's donation followed similar drop-offs at schools in Marion as well as Choctaw and Butler counties.

"The Black Belt school superintendents choose where we are going to donate each year," Weber said. "We collect books year round, and when we've collected enough we will take them to where they are being donated."

Tracy Woods serves as the librarian for both Knox and Sophia P. Kingston Elementary schools in Selma, and she said the 750 donated books that will soon line the shelves at Knox are sure to be scooped up by the school's voracious young readers.

"These kids are lined up to pick up a new library book almost before I can get in here in the morning, so it's a big deal to have new books because you don't want the kids to get bored with the books you have to offer," Woods said. "This donation has books from so many genres for them to enjoy."

Woods said students at both schools have already expressed interest in flipping through the pages of the new books.

"This is a gigantic deal for everyone here," Woods said. "And the students are very excited about this program at both schools."