ICYMI: Local celebrities surprise readers at Thompson Place

By Shea Drake

Nashville Predators’ mascot Gnash and Fox 17 News Anchor Stacy Case weathered blazing temperatures to inspire children to read during the Thompson Place Golfing and Grooming’s Book’em event held over the summer.

Grooming Great Readers is a Book’em literacy program funded by The Nashville Predators Foundation. Through GGR, Book'em partners with local barbershops to encourage kids and their families to read when they visit the barbers.

“Mr. Thompson has been a fervent advocate of children's literacy from the moment he was approached about being part of the program,” said Book’em Executive Director Melissa Spradlin.

“We appreciate his willingness to extend beyond his job as a barber to do more for the community where his business is located,” Spradlin continued. “We were thrilled when he agreed to provide a chance for the Preds and Stacy Case from Fox 17 News to visit Thompson Place.”

For Nashville Predators’ Community Relations Coordinator Krystin Fisher, one of her favorite parts about the off-season is that it gives Gnash and the staff an opportunity to see grants in action.

“We want kids to know reading is fun and it brings people together,” Fisher said. “Some days that might mean we have a picnic at the barbershop where Gnash shows up and acts out his favorite book.”

Fox News 17 Anchor Stacy Case felt honored to be a part of encouraging the children to open up a book and read and dream. She believes reading has the power to change a child’s direction. In addition, it opens up possibilities for everyone regardless of their upbringing or socioeconomic limitations.

“I love to see kids succeed and dream,” Case said. “I feel it’s an honor any time I get to spend time with young people. They are our future and they have their whole lives in front of them. If I can help them dream bigger in any small way… I am honored to have had that opportunity.”

For two years, Thompson Place has participated in the Grooming Great Readers program to help improve literacy rates in the Nashville community.

“Reading is an essential life skill that everyone must possess,” said Timothy Thompson, owner of Thompson Place Golfing and Grooming. “One becomes a better reader by reading.

“I feel the more exposure that one child has to read, the better opportunity he/she has to learn. With the books that are provided, parents, children and other adults are given the same experience.”

Thompson Place was selected as a site visit due to Thompson’s enormous passion for fostering a love of reading in his shop and the surrounding community, Book’em Operations Coordinator Stacey Vanyo said.

Book’em seeks to remove barriers by providing free books to kids of all ages in Nashville, in hopes that as individuals are given the chance to experience the transformative power of literacy, the community as a whole will grow stronger.

“I was blown away by all the work Tim and the Thompson Place team put in to make this event a success,” Vanyo said. “He is a wonderful event planner and host, and the way he engaged the kids from beginning to end was a joy to witness.

“We are so grateful to have a literacy ambassador like Tim participating in the Grooming Great Readers program, and can't wait to keep building on this partnership for many years to come.”