

# The Berkshire Eagle

June 12, 2012

---

## Wally the Green Monster rallies around reading in Pittsfield

[By Jenn Smith, Berkshire Eagle Staff](#)

PITTSFIELD

What's green and fuzzy and read all over at Morning side Community School?

That would be Boston Red Sox mascot, Wally the Green Monster.

Wally and Matt McLaughlin, the ballclub's mascot program assistant, came west on Monday for a "meet and read" with students at Morn ingside. Today, Wally will visit students at Egremont Elementary School.



*The Boston Red Sox mascot, Wally the Green Monster, revs up Morningside Community School in Pittsfield on Monday. (Jenn Smith / Berkshire Eagle Staff )*

Both schools are partnered with Berkshire Bank, whose affiliates, Berkshire Insurance Group and Hanover Insurance Group, sponsored the visits to promote literacy and summer reading.

As of Friday afternoon for Pittsfield Public Schools, school is out for the summer, and efforts at the local, state, and national levels to encourage reading are ongoing through summer vacation. Numerous studies show that students who read during the summer maintain their reading skills, and many make gains in reading and other academic areas.

"Summer is coming and do you know what is the most important muscle to work out? Your brain," a Red Sox jersey-clad McLaughlin told students.

McLaughlin told students that, with 370 public libraries in Massachusetts and approximately 8.4 million children's books in circulation, they have every opportunity to read this summer. Also,

students who join the team's summer reading program are eligible to win game tickets after sending in proof they read at least nine books this summer.

After playing some Red Sox trivia, McLaughlin read the book, "Hello, Wally!" by NESN Red Sox broadcaster Jerry Remy. Since Wally can't talk, he gave a very interactive and high energy interpretation of all the pages by dancing, waving, clapping his hands and nodding.

Afterward, a series of Wally books, including the latest by Red Sox second baseman Dustin Pedroia, were donated to the school library. Plus, one lucky first-grader from Sandra Phillips' class won four tickets to a game at Fenway Park.

Morningside third-graders from Ellen Hibbard's class, Skylarae and Brodiann Magner, and Elijah Alford, said they loved baseball and reading and thought the program was "great" and "fun."

They also recommended three books for summer reading to The Eagle. Skylarae's pick is "Cinderella," Alford suggested "Star Wars" novels, and Brodiann said "The Hunger Games" series is her favorite.