

# Books + Shoes = The Perfect Match

by Ally Doliboa at MidPointe Library System

Shoes 4 The Shoeless (S4TS) is a non-profit organization based in Dayton, Ohio. Their mission is to give new sneakers and socks to children in need. Since 2010, they have donated over 85,000 pairs of shoes and socks to children in the greater Miami Valley. Last year, MidPointe Library System partnered with S4TS to not only give children in need new shoes and socks, but also books.



Middletown City Schools set up a visit from S4TS to each of their 7 elementary schools during the 2018-2019 school year. MidPointe Library System became involved halfway through that school year. At that time, we decided to use books we set aside for refilling our Free Little Libraries around town and other books soon to be listed as “discarded” as books to be distributed to S4TS school visits. When we asked the schools and S4TS if we could incorporate free books during these visits, they of course said “YES!” I was lucky enough to be able to attend one of the visits to a nearby elementary school. I went in prepared to see the worst that some kids have to walk in each day, but knowing I’d get to see their faces light up when they receive new shoes AND socks AND now a book!



Here's how S4TS works at school stops. They bring in truck loads of shoes and socks in IKEA bags, labeled by size. A class comes in, each student gets paired with an adult volunteer and the volunteer uses a sizing chart to correctly measure what size shoe the student should be wearing. We ask the student to list three of their favorite colors (so you bring back a pair that they hopefully like) and set out on a search for the perfect shoes – don't forget to grab a new pair of socks too! Once you find one or two options, bring those back to the student and try them on. If they fit and the student likes one pair, we tell them to run around the gym once to make sure the shoes do not hurt their feet. Once you have found the student their perfect pair of new shoes, you take them to the bin of books and tell them they can pick one book. Most of the time I received an excited "Really?!" from the students to which I responded "Yes! And the best part is, this book is yours forever – you don't have to return it to school!" And on to the next student until everyone leaves happy with new books, shoes, and socks.

We planned to have a supply of books ready for the 2019-2020 school year S4TS stops and we made it through 3 elementary buildings and the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Center before COVID-19 closed schools and the Library. Unfortunately, that left 4 elementary buildings without their books, shoes, and socks. As COVID-19 continues to bring uncertain times to the start of a new school year, this means that things such as shoe deliveries are just as uncertain. I recently found out that S4TS will be holding "drive thru" shoe deliveries to 8 of the buildings in the Middletown City School district for this school year. We are hoping to get books to these students as well, as the students now know that when they get new shoes, they get new books!