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### **Merrydale Elementary to Celebrate New Book Vending Machine**

**BATON ROUGE, La.** — Merrydale Elementary School will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate its new book vending machine designed to increase access to reading materials and inspire a love of books among students.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony will take place at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4, at the school, 6700 Rio Drive.

Atmos Energy purchased the \$7,500 machine, which will hold 228 books. The Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. will provide the books for the machine for three years.

“For our youngest learners at Merrydale Elementary, access to books builds the foundation for a lifetime of learning, one story, one smile at a time,” said Merrydale Principal Casey Wells.

Students will earn coins to purchase books by consistently demonstrating PAWS behavior:

- P: Practice Kindness
- A: Always Be Ready
- W: Work Hard
- S: Show Respect

Additionally, students can earn coins through academic excellence by meeting or exceeding classroom achievement goals. This program encourages positive behavior and celebrates academic success while fostering a love of reading.

The book vending machine allows students to select and keep books of their own, encouraging independent reading and fostering a lifelong love of learning.

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