

# What's New at Read to Grow

Spring 2011



## Junior League Works for Early Literacy



Gen Halloran, Junior League president, center, with Myra Healy, coordinator of Books for Kids Read at Home Initiative, and Jim Crispino, United Way of CFC.

The Junior League of Eastern Fairfield County (JLEFC) continues its work to help promote early literacy by participating in the "Dr. Seuss Throwdown," a community challenge issued by Read to Grow and United Way of Coastal Fairfield County to collect 100,000 books by June 1.

Last September, the Junior League made a commitment to help get books into the hands of Connecticut children in need. The group donated a spectacular 7,878 children's books to support the Books for Kids Read at Home Initiative, a partnership with the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County. Now the organization has embraced the "Throwdown" challenge and has already boosted its total donation to more than 10,000 books.

Corporations, schools, service groups, sports teams, places of worship and the community-at-large are encouraged to join the challenge. Collecting books is a simple way to make a big difference in children's lives. To learn more, call Myra Healy at 203-488-6800.

## New Volunteers Take to Maternity Units



What could be better than helping new parents give their babies a good start in life? That's what our seven newly trained Books for Babies hospital volunteers are finding out.

"I am truly loving doing this," says retired teacher Margot Sheehan, who makes her rounds at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center. We welcome Margot and Noreen Cosgrove, also at St. Francis; former teachers Carol Burke and Barbara Massey at the Hospital of St. Raphael; Kate Flanders and Jenny Minton-Quigley at Hartford Hospital; and Belinda Bralver at Bridgeport's St. Vincent's Medical Center.

Books for Babies volunteers provide the one-to-one contact with parents that is so vital to encouraging them to read to their babies from day one. Margot is thrilled to be conveying to parents her love of early literacy "and the crucial role of parents in their children's growth and development."

## Brinaina Books to Court



Bonnie Patten, left, with Linda Sylbester, Books for Kids coordinator.

Thanks to the initiative of one woman, children who go to any of Connecticut's 13 Court Service Centers will have books to read and then take home with them.

Bonnie Patten, an attorney formerly with Wiggin & Dana, was concerned about the children who often have to wait for long periods while their parents receive help on their cases, which typically involve foreclosure, divorce or custody issues. Having books to read could help ease a stressful situation. Bonnie knew about Read to Grow, and thought it would be an ideal partnership.

To kick off the initiative, 750 books were distributed to centers throughout Connecticut.

Patten also engaged the New Haven County Bar Association Public Service Committee to run a book drive to support our programs, and Read to Grow received nearly 1,400 books from this wonderful effort.

## RTG to Provide Training for Home Visitors

Read to Grow has received \$10,000 from the Carolyn Foundation to provide an early literacy component to the Nurturing Families home visitation services in New Haven for the next year. This funding will be used to train home visitors in early literacy work with parents and to build home libraries for children.

## Posters for Primary Care

LEARNING BEGINS AT BIRTH.  
YOU can help your baby learn!



Thanks to a grant from the Tyler L. Rigg Memorial Foundation, Read to Grow's message will soon be catching the attention of parents around the state.

Funds were provided for creating a poster to help parents understand that learning begins at birth and that they are their baby's first teachers. The poster follows the themes of our "First Guide for Parents" and encourages parents to give their babies a variety of experiences with language in the context of a loving relationship.

Read to Grow will distribute the posters to our partner hospitals and to pediatric primary care centers and offices across the state.

## What Do You Know? Survey Shows Misconceptions

A 2009 survey by the Pearson Foundation reveals how much, and how little, Americans know about the connection between childhood literacy and future success.

- 95% of Americans believe early childhood literacy is an important problem, but are unaware that not reading to children under age 5 has long-term consequences for a child's academic achievement and life-long success.
- 73% percent of Americans wrongly believe that if children enter kindergarten unprepared, they will catch up in elementary school.
- 75% of the population is unaware that nearly 61% of low-income families do not have any age-appropriate books in their homes.



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