

What's New at Read to Grow

Fall 2011



A Message from Executive Director Anthony DiLauro

I am extremely excited to join Read to Grow, and to work with Read to Grow's dedicated board members, staff, volunteers, partners and supporters who are committed to promoting early literacy and making a difference in the lives of thousands of Connecticut children and families.

I have spent my professional life working on behalf of children. For 10 years, I worked at Boys Town New York, an affiliate of the original Father Flanagan's Boys Town in Omaha, where we provided services for more than 450 of New York's neediest children and families annually. I know how important it is that children have a strong start in life, and I am honored to help Read to Grow bring its life-changing programs to more children, especially to those from low-income families who do not have resources of their own.

One of my first efforts as executive director is to help develop a solid strategic plan to guide Read to Grow's growth and development for the next five years so that our direction and activities are always tied to our mission and vision of making early literacy a reality for all Connecticut children.

This is a wonderful time to be a part of Read to Grow and I am thrilled to help lead this great organization in its next phase of growth.



Books for Babies Launches at Middlesex

Read to Grow recently launched our ninth hospital partnership, moving one step closer to our goal of giving every Connecticut newborn a good start on the path to literacy. Middlesex Hospital in Middletown now includes our Books for Babies program as part of their Pregnancy & Birth Center services, and hospital staff has begun giving out Read to Grow's literacy packets to all parents with newborns. The program is funded in part by Middlesex Hospital and will serve approximately 1,100 babies born at the hospital's birthing center annually.

Books for Babies volunteers will begin visiting with parents on the Pregnancy & Birth Center to provide early literacy information and support as soon as they have completed their training, a joint effort between the hospital and Read to Grow staff.

Middlesex Hospital serves 23 towns and 250,000 residents of Middlesex County. Read to Grow is thrilled to bring Books for Babies to Middlesex and to the families served by the hospital.

Town Fair Tire Delivers Funds for Van



Town Fair Tire employees hoist the company banner with pride in front of our van, pictured with Read to Grow interim director Chet Brodnicki, right. Look for RTG on the road!

Thanks to a generous donation from Town Fair Tire Foundation, Read to Grow recently purchased a "gently used" cargo van, replacing our well-worn passenger minivan. With this larger vehicle, we have boosted our efficiency in delivering books around the state and in picking up books collected by children, schools, organizations, civic groups and so many others that help support our programs.

Town Fair Tire made the \$10,000 gift because "Read to Grow is an organization offering the community and their children a chance to have access to books they would not normally have," a representative said. "Town Fair Tire Foundation Inc. is aligned with that commitment, especially in fostering education by the distribution of books, even for the youngest readers."

Saluting Our Book Drive Stars

We are so grateful for all of our amazing book donors, and to all who have run book drives to support early literacy. Every book we receive makes a difference in a child's life.

Did you know that many of these books drives are run by youngsters? When we ask what inspires them, whether age 6 or 16, the answer is the same: They can't imagine their lives without a house full of books and want to give to children who don't have books of their own.

We recognize some of our more recent Book Drive Stars for their outstanding contributions:

- Fairfield Preparatory School – 4,000 books
- Girl Scouts of Connecticut, statewide collection for Week of the Young Child – 10,140 books
- Girl Scout Troop #39306, Milford – 929 books
- Junior League of Eastern Fairfield County – 10,000 books
- Emma Hart Willard School, Berlin – 1,282 books
- Ellen Schenk, Simsbury, Bat Mitzvah project – 675 books
- Delaney Yule, Southbury student – 570 books

Kudos to the Kiwanis Club of Fairfield and to Fairfield citizens for supporting Read to Grow for the past five years and for making an impressive contribution to promoting children's literacy. The club's fifth annual book drive yielded 8,150 books, bringing the total number donated by the club to 36,000 books!

To donate books or run a book drive, see www.readtogrow.org for information.



Ellen Schenk displays the bounty of books she collected for Read to Grow for her Bat Mitzvah project.

A Night of Thanks to Patrons

Against the backdrop of Long Island Sound on a summer evening, Read to Grow thanked our patrons at an intimate gathering of friends and supporters at the Branford home of board treasurer Stacy Ruwe and husband Patrick. The event also honored Jennifer Aniskovich, Susan Katz and Donna Lechner-Gruskay, who recently retired from our board after many years of extraordinary service and leadership.

Board chair Roxanne Coady introduced our new executive director Anthony DiLauro, gave a warm thank you to Chet Brodnicki, who stepped in as interim director in May, and welcomed new board members Alva Greenberg of Old Saybrook, Bonnie Patten of Killingworth, and Belinda Bralver of Westport.

Thank you to Kenneth Pugh, PhD, director of research at Haskins Laboratory, who was the evening's guest speaker. He talked about early literacy development and Read to Grow's work to "light up the left side of a baby's brain" with language and books, which is essential to building a solid foundation for later reading.



Patrons gathered at the Ruwe home in Branford for an evening of thanks and to honor RTG's retiring board members.

News Briefs

- Congratulations to board member Dr. Joanne Cunard, Professor of Education, Saint Joseph College, on being selected to receive the 2011 International Reading Association's Celebrate Literacy Award, which honors "individuals who have made significant contributions to the organization and the field of reading." Joanne will be recognized at the 60th Connecticut Reading Association conference.
- Welcome to Casey Charpentier, our new Books for Babies site coordinator at Yale-New Haven Hospital. Casey is working with the Child Life Department at Yale to oversee our program there, which serves 4,500 newborns and their families annually.
- The Read to Grow community mourns the recent passing of James Welbourne. Jim was New Haven's city librarian for a decade, and Read to Grow board member for eight years. Jim made an outstanding and lasting contribution to our organization and to the well being and healthy development of our youngest citizens. He will be missed.

Have You Seen This Family Before?



Flavia, Alyssa and baby Antonio read together.

This beautiful family has been featured in many of our Read to Grow materials over the past few years. We met them through our Books for Babies program at Bridgeport Hospital five years ago. The family stayed connected to RTG until they moved to Brazil nearly two years ago. Recently they sent us an email that made our day and we want to share it with you.

"I don't know if you still remember me. I'm Flavia, from Bridgeport, the Brazilian mother ... My kids are Alyssa (age 5) and Antonio (age 3). I didn't have a chance before to thank you for the books. My children love to read. But I thank you for the first books in their lives. It will always be precious for all of us. We will never forget that. Thanks for all."



Antonio, age 3, with books from Read to Grow that his family brought with them to Brazil.



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