OUR MISSION: Read to Grow promotes language-building and literacy for children, beginning at birth, and supports parents as their babies’ first teachers.

New Outreach Goes to Connecticut Families in Need Through Alliances

Read to Grow has launched two new initiatives extending our reach to tens of thousands of additional low-income families in Connecticut.

A dozen permanent Book Places now operating at other nonprofits allow their clients and families to get free children’s books and information on how to build the language skills and literacy of their children.

In the second initiative—called Partnerships—Read to Grow formally collaborates with agencies to add an early childhood literacy component to services they already deliver to families living in need or at risk. While each Partnership is unique, all focus on one-to-one interaction in the delivery of books and literacy information to parents and other caregivers.

The Partnerships offer opportunities for Read to Grow to gather data on book use and language-skill activities within families.

Funding to launch the two initiatives has come from Seedlings Foundation, NewAlliance Foundation, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts, and Catholic Charity League of New Haven.

These grants have enabled Read to Grow to: hire a bilingual staff member; purchase bilingual children’s books; purchase bookcases and other materials for Book Places; and help to meet costs from increased staff hours.

The motivation for both initiatives is two-fold: to reach more families who cannot afford books for their children and who might not otherwise have opportunities to learn the importance of early language skills; and to collaborate with other agencies for greater efficiency and impact.

Key findings from 50 years of research show that children of lower income, less educated parents typically enter school with poorer language skills than more privileged children. By some measures, 5-year-olds of less socioeconomic means score more than two years behind on standardized language tests.

As Pulitzer-Prize winner Nicholas Kristof wrote in his New York Times column: “One reason American antipoverty efforts over the last half-century haven’t been more effective is that they mostly treat symptoms, not causes. To put it another way, we don’t invest nearly enough in helping children in the first few years of life as their brains are developing. If we miss that window, then adult interventions like higher minimum wages can never be fully effective.”

PARTNERSHIP WITH CONNECTICUT FOOD BANK

GROW! Truck – A Pantry on Wheels with Books Aboard

The books were ready for picking.

Near shelves of unshucked corn, dirt-dappled beets and frozen meats rested a big cardboard box filled with children’s books.

All of these goods and more were being delivered by Connecticut Food Bank, in a bountiful array inside its GROW! Truck.

The truck—a mobile grocery store with both farm fresh food and refrigeration for packaged and perishable items—had just pulled up behind the George E. Pipkin Head Start Center. The pre-school operates year-round in a southeast Bridgeport neighborhood.
From the Desk of Roxanne Coady, Board Chair

O

ger the almost 15 years of Read to Grow’s work we have been asked about and are interested in the efficacy of the work we do. Sometimes the entrepreneurial side of me is impatient about spending time and money to conduct extensive studies to prove having books in a home, being read to, or sharing stories are effective in building language and literacy. It seems intuitive and simply true.

But, of course, intuition is not enough. Fortunately, over the last decade one study after another has proven the effectiveness of books in a home and reading with your baby. The latest report is from the American Academy of Pediatrics, which says that “reading aloud to young children beginning at infancy is one of the most effective ways to expose them to enriched language and to encourage specific early literacy needed to promote school readiness.”

This has been our rallying cry and our work. I recently saw a chart containing three images put together by Abbott Laboratories. The triptych shows the brain development of a child. Using photo panels, each depicting the neural and structural connections formed at different ages — one at birth, one at 15 months old, and the third between 2 and 3 years old.

The first panel has a few scattered twig-like images on a background of white. The second panel — showing the brain of the same baby after 15 months of daily language stimulation through human interactions — is a dense network of black lines going in all directions and crisscrossing. The final panel is even denser and wilder, with more black lines and interconnections.

The chart shows a wonderful development. I can literally see the impact of words and sounds on a young brain and how they create the network for young children to learn. It is abundantly clear: words and sounds dramatically change babies’ lives.

We are thrilled and energized by our work at Read to Grow that reaches tens of thousands of families in Connecticut with this message and the tools and books they need. Of course I am happy that there is scientific proof of the efficacy, but I still cling to the simple magic of holding babies and regaling them with poems, stories and song.

Thank you for helping us to make this happen.

Jeff Hartmann Joins Read to Grow’s Board

Read to Grow welcomed Jeff E. Hartmann in September as a Board Member and new Treasurer.

Jeff is founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Hartmann Group, which offers real estate, financial and gaming advisory services and has offices in Old Saybrook.

With more than two decades in CFO, COO and CEO capacities, Jeff had a seminal role in the creation and development of the casino gaming industry in New England. His career spans the casinos of well-known brands and Mohegan Sun in Connecticut, Revel in Atlantic City and Mohegan Sun Pocono Downs in Pennsylvania.

“We’ve been trying to recruit Jeff to Read to Grow for many years,” said Board Chair Roxanne Coady. “I’m thrilled that we’ve finally succeeded. He brings wisdom and passion for hard work that is the hallmark of Read to Grow’s board.”

Jeff has worked closely with major Wall Street firms including Goldman Sachs, CitiBank, Wells Fargo and Bank of America. As Chief Financial Officer of the Mohegan Tribal Gaming Authority, he played a pivotal role in securing $4 billion in public and private financing. During his 16-year tenure at Mohegan Sun, he directed the strategic planning, collaborated with the senior leadership team, created the company’s vision, and maintained and preserved the Mohegan Sun core values.

Jeff has addressed other opportunities, from acquiring the WNBA Connecticut Sun franchise for Mohegan Sun to leading the Mohegan Sun executive team in its 2010 master plan as well as leading the acquisition team that acquired Pocono Downs racetrack and built a hotel and casino.

Since founding The Hartmann Group in 2012, Jeff has served as president of the firm, which specializes in the real estate, hospitality and gaming industries.

Jeff began his career as a certified public accountant with PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP, working from 1984 to 1991 in the Philadelphia and New York offices as a specialist in real estate and casinos. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Board for the Ocean Breeze Management Company, LLC and is Vice Chairman of the Connecticut Sports Foundation Against Cancer.

The Hartmann family lives in Old Lyme.

Jeff Hartmann
**OUTREACH: GROW! TRUCK – A PANTRY ON WHEELS WITH BOOKS ABOARD**

(Continued from page 1)

On this August morning, parents of children in the Early Start and Head Start programs were lining up to make the truck is eventually climb aboard, one by one, and select what they would take home to their families.

**GROW! Truck** is a three-year project run by the food bank and sponsored by Stop & Shop. Its goals is to increase nutritional education and healthy meals in the households of low-income families with children enrolled in early childhood, pre-school childcare and Head Start programs. The project operates at sites in Bridgeport, Stratford, New Haven, Hamden, and Trumbull.

Read to Grow formed a partnership with the food bank and sponsored the truck’s offerings, adding an early childhood literacy component. The Pigkin site was the first place where Read to Grow joined the effort, providing, at the truck’s opening, a variety of books for children and their families. The truck is filled with a variety of books for a range of children from newborns to teens. Many books are bilingual English-Spanish. Clients of The Village and others are welcomed to come during operating hours to select free books for their children to keep.

**OUTREACH: BOOK PLACE OPENS AT THE VILLAGE**

Wake Up, It’s ‘Goodnight Moon’!

Matthew Correa selected “Goodnight Moon” to read to his son, even though the 11-month-old had just woken from a mid-day nap.

“He’s not quite there yet,” the father said. “But he likes to look at the pictures.”

Mrs. Correa is one of the 34 parents who brought their children to the last Friday in August to take part in a Book Place opening at The Village on Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford, across the street from Bulkeley High School.

The Village has been operating for over 100 years. It provides behavioral health treatment for children, foster care and adoption, and community service supports for children and their families in the Greater Hartford region. It has three locations in the capital—The Wethersfield Avenue site, another on Spring Street and administrative offices on Albany Avenue.

A Book Place—one of Read to Grow’s new initiatives—is now a component at the Wethersfield Avenue and Spring Street locations, which serve thousands of people.

At each site, bookcases are filled with a variety of new and used books, appropriate for a range of children from newborns to teens. Many books are bilingual English-Spanish. Clients of The Village and others are welcomed to come during operating hours to select free books for their children to keep.

From Mothers Receiving Our Literacy Packet in the Hospitals

**What We Hear**

From Mothers Receiving Our Literacy Packet in the Hospitals

**This is a great program. The tools and suggestions are great, even for my 10- & 7-year-old daughters. Reading is a powerful tool, and children are never too young to learn.** Thank you.

Tanya Rosario, whose youngest child was born in Hartford Hospital in Sept. 2014.

“I didn’t know how important it was to read, sing and talk to babies this young. My son loves the book(s) and tries to imitate as best he can the sounds and shapes of words.”

Kimberly Meister, whose son was born in Hartford Hospital in May 2014.

“Henry is 10 months and loves “Welcome to the World!”. You should see how his eyes light up when we read this book to him. If you have any other books, please send them.”

Yvonne Kielhorn, whose son was born at Yale-New Haven Hospital in Nov. 2013.

“Due to the generous support of our donors we were able to help 344 children in the Greater Danbury area. These children were able to receive backpacks, school supplies and a $100 gift card (for purchase of clothes). In addition, we were able to offer them books from Read to Grow. Having books available at the distribution event for children to take home further strengthens the program and promotes family literacy. Every child and sibling had an opportunity to select a book to take home that day. We could not have done this without your program.”

Betsy Batista, at the United Way of Western Connecticut.

“Thank you so much. My kids were so excited when they received the books you sent them. We sat and started reading right away. The choices that were sent were perfect. They loved them all.”

Beata Alicja of Newtown.
With Help from Our Friends…

CATHOLIC CHARITY LEAGUE OF NEW HAVEN gave a $4,575 gift to boost our initiatives last summer. The League raised the funds during their annual spring benefit luncheon. Pictured from left to right are: Donna Dorr, of the League; Ken Tolson of Read to Grow; Rose Ann Considine of the League; Roxanne Coody, Board Chair of Read to Grow; and Tom Gullotta, Read to Grow Board Member.

UNITED WAY OF COASTAL FAIRFIELD COUNTY’s $28,000 grant in July funds a sixth year of the Books for Kids Read at Home initiative. The long term project is a partnership between Read to Grow and United Way to ensure that children in the 12-town region have age-appropriate books at home. More than 100,000 books have gone to the UWCFC region over the last five years.

You Can Help the Work for Literacy and Families for Generations to Come

LEAVE A LEGACY

A statewide public awareness effort to promote charitable giving through wills and estate plans.

Please consider:
- Preparing a will and including a gift for Read to Grow.
- Donating a dollar amount or a percentage of assets, including stocks, bonds, CDs, real estate, vehicles, art, jewelry, or other property.
- Naming Read to Grow as a beneficiary of your IRA or pension plan.
- Naming Read to Grow as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy.
- Honoring friends and remembering loved ones with memorial gifts.
- Naming Read to Grow as a beneficiary of your retirement plan.
- Naming Read to Grow as a beneficiary of your charitable remainder trust.
- Naming Read to Grow as a beneficiary of your charitable gift annuity.

DO YOU KNOW?

What percent of children not reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade do not graduate high school on time? (This is four times greater than for proficient readers in 3rd grade.)

a. 8%  b. 16%  c. 20%

Mary Bradley

Places for The Books & Books for The Places

Mary Bradley found 12 ways to help Read to Grow this summer. Several of the dozen bookcases from her home in Hamden that she donated are already set up at Book Places in New Haven, Bridgeport and Hartford.

Mrs. Bradley decided this year to downsize to a smaller residence after the death of her husband, Charles, a realtor for decades in the Greater New Haven area. Her lifelong passion for books had led to an extraordinary collection. To accommodate the smaller residence after the death of her husband, Mrs. Bradley decided this year to downsize to a smaller residence after the death of her husband.

In finding new value for items that she could no longer keep and that her two grown children don’t want. Also, a 39-year career in fundraising for nonprofits that include Quinnipiac University has made Mrs. Bradley agile in connecting commodities with people who need them.

“It would give Charles great pleasure to know how the bookcases are being used,” she said one August morning as the last of the sturdy, wooden shelves were carried from her house to a van.

“I didn’t want to have a tag sale. I wanted to give them where they’re needed most. I’m so glad it’s Read to Grow.”

Throughout Read to Grow’s 14 years, we have depended on donations that include hundreds of thousands of gently used books. Book drive organizers provide a basic staple for operations. Today, with the initiatives, Read to Grow’s new needs are being met by new friends.

With Help from Our Friends…

Wendy Lacasse

We Thank Our Volunteers!

Read to Grow volunteers generously donate more than 10,000 hours of work every year. They bring a wealth of abilities and talents to our organization and help in everything from administrative & clerical duties and book cleaning & sorting to visits with families in our 12 partner hospitals across the state. The work of Read to Grow could not be done without the cadre of more than 70 people, many of whom have been with us for years. We are grateful to each and every one.

ACORD, Inc.
Deborah Ahern
Faith Barrington
Grace Callejo
Lina Cardozo
Christina Cerillo
Robin Charney
Ting Chen
Judith Cohen
Janet Crusoe
Eleanor Doyle
Jane Fox
Barbara Gibson
Genevieve Goff
Camille Golod
Dawn Guarino
Maryann Hall
Mary Healy
Jeanne Hyatt
Meghan Jakubski
Eleanor Jourdan
Hedli Kaplan
Irene Kaufman
Deborah Kelly
Evelyn Krevolin
Lynne Krupa
Jane Llabie
Wendy Lacasse
Kate Lee
Mary Lewis
Mami Lustberg
Carol Lutes
Gweneth Maloy
Barbara Massey
Hannah Melching
Cheryl Milano
Shirley Mindner
Ann Marie Minnick
Anna Mary Mulhearn
Karen Murray
Lynne Nathan
Cynthia Nordha
Shannon Oneto
Kyle Pembert
Jane Presley
Mary Jane Pych
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Barbara Shuckra
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Heidi Smuhl
Sherry Stekloff
Joshua Styles
Jennifer Sullivan
Vilma Thompson
Nancy Vagnini
Julia Verrilli
Anna Vescovi
Laura Vescovi
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 Volunteers at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown who work in our Books for Babies program (left to right): Rebecca Armstrong, Lina Cardozo and Sherry Stekloff

You Can Help the Work for Literacy and Families for Generations to Come

LEAVE A LEGACY

A statewide public awareness effort to promote charitable giving through wills and estate plans.

Please consider:
- Preparing a will and including a gift for Read to Grow.
- Donating a dollar amount or a percentage of assets, including stocks, bonds, CDs, real estate, vehicles, art, jewelry, or other property.
- Naming Read to Grow as a beneficiary of your IRA or pension plan.
- Naming Read to Grow as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy.
- Honoring friends and remembering loved ones with memorial gifts.

DO YOU KNOW?

What percent of children not reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade do not graduate high school on time? (This is four times greater than for proficient readers in 3rd grade.)

a. 8%  b. 16%  c. 20%

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Books for Babies
It’s in Hospitals and Much More

Books for Babies (BFB) has been in hospitals for 14 years, delivering free books for newborns and literacy guides to their parents on maternity units. Today it extends into primary care centers, Family Resource Centers, and in-home visiting programs—all to reach both parents-to-be and many more low-income families.

BFB provides both our ‘First Guide for Parents of Newborns’ DVD and our new ‘In the Womb’ tri-fold brochure to nine OB-primary care centers across the state. The material also has gone to 40 Family Resource Centers and several programs with staff who go into homes for one-on-one services.

In another way to reach more parents, BFB gives new board books to four pediatric primary care centers for their 2-month well-baby checkups.

All the newer work is based on years of service in the hospitals. Partnered with 12 hospitals, BFB reaches about 22,000 newborns and their parents annually.