

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

CHET Baby Scholars and Read to Grow

Taking First Steps toward Babies' Future Education

Parents of newborns receiving our free Literacy Packets in hospitals across the state now get something extra. And it could boost chances that their babies will one day go on to higher education.

Information about the State of Connecticut's new CHET Baby Scholars program, which gives families an initial \$100 when they enroll in savings accounts for their infants' higher education, is now included in Read to Grow packets at five of our 12 partnered hospitals. (Packets at the other seven hospitals will have the information this fall.)

Research has shown that a child with savings reserved for higher education is seven times more likely to go to college or other post-secondary studies than a child without that type of savings. And, research further shows, the amount of money is not the determining factor. Rather it is the mere existence of savings.

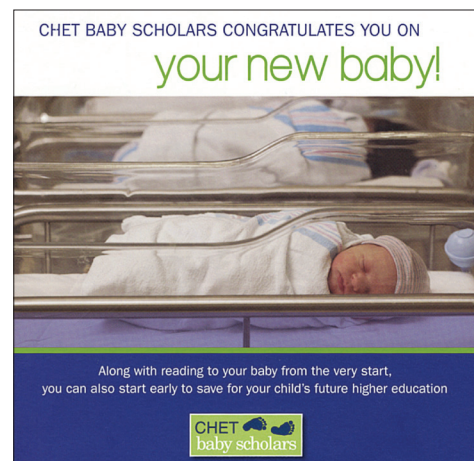
The State of Connecticut will give an additional \$150 to a CHET Baby Scholars

savings account before the child's fourth birthday if family members or friends have contributed a minimum of \$150 to that account. Family and friends can continue to contribute to the account in years to come.

"CHET for babies is a great opportunity for families," said Donna Meehan, a Read to Grow volunteer at Saint Francis Hospital in Hartford. She and other volunteers at our 12 partnered hospitals meet with mothers in their maternity rooms to talk about the importance of early childhood literacy and to go over contents of the Literacy Packets. "And it's terrific that grandparents can contribute" to the accounts, she added.

Joan Roczynski, a volunteer at Yale-New Haven Hospital, said, "It's a great partnership and a wonderful extension of the Read to Grow Books for Babies program."

At Read to Grow, Priscilla Russo and Diane Visconti, who manage Books for Babies, have organized meetings at the hospitals so that volunteers can learn about CHET Baby



Scholars. "It's interesting and gratifying to watch the volunteers' positive reaction to this new partnership," said Priscilla. "Their enthusiasm to pass on new and current information to the families they visit in the hospitals is contagious and appreciated."

By Priscilla Russo

More information and instructions on how to enroll are available at: www.aboutchet.com/babyscholarsRTG. A CHET representative can be contacted at: 866.269.1226.



TAKING THE STAGE — Six-year-old Cleve Cooper Jr. stands at the podium with his mother, Carron, at Read to Grow's 15-for-15 Evening of Celebration in April to mark our 15th year and honor 15 champions of children. Carron Cooper, of Bloomfield, represented the 12 hospitals partnered with our Books for Babies program. Cleve Jr. was born in Saint Francis Hospital in Hartford, where Carron received our Literacy Packet. For more photos of the Evening of Celebration, see page 3.

Sharing *Two at the Zoo* Is a Gift for the Family

Two at the Zoo.

That's been 5-year-old Adrienne's favorite book since last spring, when her grandmother received it at a Read to Grow workshop.

Denise Charles, who lives in Bridgeport and cares for both her granddaughter and her mildly impaired daughter, likes the book herself. She also appreciates the GROW! Truck sessions that offered the workshop. Denise was eligible for the 10 biweekly sessions, because her granddaughter is in Head Start preschool at the city's West End Child Care Center.

The GROW! Truck offers year-round enrollments for different sessions at several Head Start locations in Bridgeport and New Haven. Participants not only take part in workshops but they also visit the mobile food pantry, which is owned and operated by Connecticut Food Bank for this special project. Read to Grow partnered with the GROW! Truck in 2014.

"The food truck was right on time, for me, every two weeks, just when I needed it," said Denise, who is Adrienne's legal guardian.

(Continued on page 2)

From the Desk of Roxanne Coady

Sometimes we forget to tell our friends how much they mean to us—how their support and wisdom have motivated us, how their generosity and commitment enable us to accomplish our goals. This is true in our personal lives and our philanthropic lives.

We have realized over the years that our most generous donors are also keenly interested in understanding early childhood development, brain development and how real and meaningful change can occur.

Now, in response to this interest, we are forming a Circle of Friends. It creates an opportunity for loyal donors to hear about the latest research and initiatives around early childhood development from prominent, engaged experts. Of course, we will add food and wine and the conviviality of interesting people.

Most particularly, the Circle of Friends gives us an opportunity to express deep gratitude for the trust and inspiration of steadfast supporters who help us change the lives of our most underserved children and families.

Our first gathering is set for October 8, during the early evening at the Guilford Yacht Club. A highlight will be featured speaker Annie Murphy Paul, a TED Talks presenter and author of *Origins: How the Nine Months before Birth Shape the Rest of Our Lives* and soon-to-be-published *Brilliant: The New Science of Smart*.

NEWSLETTER OF READ TO GROW

A publication of Read to Grow, Inc.
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Through new collaborations

Reaching More Families in Need of Children's Books

Read to Grow's collaborations with other nonprofits serving families living in need have led to dozens of new **Book Places** and **Partnerships** throughout the state. We plan more collaborations in the coming year.

In 15 months, we have opened 23 Book Places at other nonprofits. At these permanent places, families who receive services at the host sites or who live in the surrounding communities have easy access to visit and select free English and bilingual-Spanish books for their children to take home and keep. Book Places also provide literacy information for parents and childcare providers, and they offer workshops by Read to Grow staff.

Of the 23 Book Places now open, five are in Bridgeport and the Bridgeport area, five are in Hartford and surrounding cities, eight are in New Haven and surrounding cities, three are in New London, one is in

Manchester, and one is in Middletown. For a full listing of locations, with details that include hours and public transportation routes, visit our website: www.readtogrow.org

Through 12 Partnerships, Read to Grow also collaborates with other agencies, adding an early childhood literacy component to services they already provide directly to families. The primary focus of these partnerships is to offer children's books and and literacy guidance through workshops. Our Partnerships are with:

- **Early Head Start with All Our Kin** — in New Haven;
- **GROW! Truck with CT Food Bank** — in Bridgeport and in New Haven;
- **Healthy Start with Fair Haven Community Health Center** — in New Haven;
- **Malta Food Pantry at St. Justin Church** — in Hartford;

- **Nurturing Families Network with Catholic Charities at Southside Family Center** — in Hartford;
- **Nurturing Families Network with Fair Haven Community Health Center** — in New Haven;
- **Nurturing Families Network with Families in Crisis** — in Hartford;
- **Nurturing Families Network with Family Centered Services of CT** — in New Haven;
- **Nurturing Families Network at L+M Hospital** — in New London
- **Nurturing Families Network with VNA of South Central CT** — in 16 communities;
- **Yale University New Haven MOMS Partnership** — in New Haven (several sites);
- **CT Parent Power** — statewide (based in Hartford)

By Evelyn Tomasello

SHARING TWO AT THE ZOO IS A GIFT FOR THE FAMILY

(Continued from page 1)

"Sometimes it's a struggle, and the information I received about nutrition and reading with my grandchild was great."

Denise, 57, works as a caretaker at an Abilis group home for developmentally disabled adults in Stamford. She does three overnight shifts every week. Her husband recently retired, and the couple plans to move the family to the north end of Bridgeport, where they are buying a condominium with federal HUD assistance.

Life, Denise said, should be easier and quieter in the new neighborhood. Because it is often

hard to make ends meet, she appreciates the gifts that come her way—the children's books and information from Read to Grow among them.

"I wasn't an eager reader (as a child)," Denise said. "It took me a while to enjoy reading. I started high school, then dropped out" and later got a diploma from Central High School.

Today, her granddaughter often asks her to read *Two at the Zoo*. Denise happily obliges. She especially enjoys the time that the two spend together.

By Myra Healy



TOGETHER TIME — Denise Charles enjoys book-sharing with her granddaughter, Adrienne.

15-for-15—All in Celebration!

More than 220 guests enjoyed Read to Grow's Evening of Celebration in April to mark our 15th year and to honor 15 champions of children from across Connecticut. The party at Saint Clements Castle in Portland included: Dr. Kiki and Sen. Ted Kennedy Jr., honorary co-chairs; author Amy Bloom, master of ceremonies; and Clo Davis, event committee chairperson.

Read to Grow thanks all who supported this special evening and who have powered our mission over the years to promote early childhood literacy. Our friends and colleagues make our work

possible. After giving more 1.3 million children's books, Read to Grow now redoubles efforts to reach more families in needs of books and information about building their children's language skills and literacy.

*Photos courtesy
of Tricia Bohan
Photography
of Branford*



Steve Sigel, executive director of the Garde Arts Center, plays his violin to accompany the shared reading of *Welcome to the World* by sisters Hannah (far left) and Alexa Galindo. Their mother, Lizavetta Galindo, first received children's books from Read to Grow when she was pregnant with Hannah. *Welcome to the World* is included in all our Literacy Packets given free in hospitals to mothers of newborns.



State Sen. Beth Bye (left), who was one of the celebration's 15 Honorees, and Alva Greenberg, board member of Read to Grow.



(left to right) Ann Nyberg; author Amy Bloom, the celebration's master of ceremonies; Roxanne Coady, board chair of Read to Grow; and Brian Ameche.



(left to right) Liz Shannon; Virginia Van Dyk; and Kate D'Addabbo. Both Mrs. Van Dyk and Mrs. D'Addabbo are co-presidents of the Hartford Hospital Auxiliary and were Honorees.



Guests enjoy keynote speaker Myra Jones-Taylor, who heads Connecticut's new Office of Early Childhood.



(left to right) Sachin Pandya; Myra Jones-Taylor, commissioner of the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood and an Honoree; Jessica Sager, co-founder and executive director of All Our Kin and an Honoree; and Matthew Taylor.



Dr. Kiki Kennedy (left), who was honorary co-chair of the celebration, and Meghan Knight.



(left to right) Jodi Oh; State Sen. Ted Kennedy Jr., honorary co-chair of the celebration; Tony Oh; Liz Shannon; Phil Shannon; and Cynthia Whipple.



(left to right) Tracey Wilson; State Sen. Beth Bye, an Honoree; State Sen. Ted Kennedy Jr.; Amy Bloom, master of ceremonies; Clo Davis, event committee chair; and Stephen Davis.



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Once you buy from a store, GOODSHOP will then donate a percentage of your merchandise payment to Read to Grow. Overall, there is no cost to register on GOODSHOP and no cost for your charity support.

Many of the businesses frequently offer online discounts and coupons.

More than 15 million people have joined GOODSHOP since 2006, raising over \$11 million for their selected charities, according to promotions on the website.

By Tina Silidker

Facts and Findings about the Early Years of Childhood

Research on early brain development and childhood literacy shared this spring at the “Journey to Literacy Begins at Birth” conference held by Reach Out and Read in Boston shows:

- Starting at birth, babies develop 700 new neural connections per second.
- Differences in children’s cognitive skills can be measured as early as 9 months of age.
- Interactions of genes and experience shape the brain. Through everyday talking and listening, singing and showing, watching and pointing, babies enter into important learning exchanges. These “serve-and-return” exchanges are significant to healthy development.

- Stress and hostile or harmful experiences in early childhood are associated with persistent effects on the nervous and hormone systems. These effects can damage developing brain architecture and lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health. Reading to children can be a powerful antidote to stress. Also, physical closeness and shared storytelling can create positive emotional bonds.
- “Dialogic reading” actively involves children. This happens when adults help children become tellers of stories by asking questions about the books they share and then building on their responses.

By Diane Visconti

*“One of the greatest gifts adults can give to their
offspring and to their society is to read to children.”*
— Carl Sagan