

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

A campaign for good beginnings

Spread the Word — #BooksForEveryBaby

Simply tag it: #BooksForEveryBaby. Read to Grow's new social media campaign aims to spread awareness of the need for early childhood literacy and garner support for our work.

Today Read to Grow reaches the mothers of 58% of all newborns in Connecticut, giving them literacy packets with new baby books, guides for parents and reply cards, which enable them to get more free books. With #BooksForEveryBaby, we aim to reach the parents of all babies born in the state.

You can join the effort by adding the hashtag to your emails, texts and social media exchanges. Also, "like" us on Facebook (ReadtoGrowCT) and "follow" us on Twitter (@ReadtoGrowCT) then share, comment on, and Retweet our posts.

Our posts range from links to new studies on early childhood development to invitations to share photos, favorite books and activities.

The campaign was launched June 30th at a press conference at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital. Speaking were: Marna Borgstrom, President and CEO of Yale New Haven Health; New Haven Mayor Toni Harp; U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro; and Roxanne Coady, founder and board chair of Read to Grow. Also featured were Dr. Jaspreet Loyal, medical director of the newborn nursery at Yale New Haven Hospital, and Adry

Sotolongo, a mother who received our literacy packet when her son was born in early 2016.

"There is simply no better way to invest our health- and education-dollars than in our children. And we can do that through early childhood education and programs like BooksForEveryBaby," said Congresswoman DeLauro. "Read to Grow not only helps to foster the love of reading in a new generation in Connecticut, it helps kids discover the adventure that awaits us each time we open a book."

Babies begin learning the moment they are born. By age 3, a baby's brain has grown to about 80% of its adult size. Sharing books is a vital way parents help their children's healthy brain and language developments. Yet, 61% of low-income families have no age-appropriate books in their homes for children.



Dr. Jaspreet Loyal, medical director of newborn nursery at Yale New Haven Hospital, shows Read to Grow's book given to mothers of all newborns



New Haven Mayor Toni Harp speaks at the launch

LET'S REACH 100%

Just \$10 provides a newborn with a baby board book, a guide for the parents, and a reply card enabling the family to get more free books.

Today we reach 58% of Connecticut's newborns with a packet of all these goodies. Help us reach 100%!

Give online (www.readtogrow.org) or by mail. Thank you.

Prenatal Initiative Begins at Fair Haven Community Health Center

Read to Grow launched an initiative this summer designed to inform pregnant women about the important roles they will play in their babies' language development and future literacy.

The new project, which focuses on mothers-to-be receiving care at community health centers and primary care clinics, also provides free children's books so that families have home libraries even before their babies are born.

The trial of the prenatal intervention began at Fair Haven Community Health Center (FHCHC) in New Haven in July. Pregnant

women at FHCHC have the opportunity to enroll in prenatal classes that meet 10 times. Through Read to Grow's project, they receive new baby books and literacy information at all of the sessions, and Read to Grow staff present workshops at two of the sessions.

By introducing the importance of early literacy to young families, Read to Grow hopes to influence parents' attitudes and behaviors, encouraging both bonding with their newborns and language skills for their babies through the sharing of books. First exposure to this information during pregnancy sets

the foundation for better understanding and appreciation of the free literacy packets that mothers will receive in the hospital from Read to Grow when their babies are born.

"The more often new parents hear the message, the more likely it will have an impact," said Diane Visconti, Books for Babies Associate.

After completing the trial sessions at FHCHC, Read to Grow intends to offer prenatal interventions to other community health centers and primary care clinics in the state.

By Elizabeth Cech

2nd Book Place in Waterbury Becomes 30th in State

WATERBURY — It's a warm summer afternoon in the lobby of Catholic Charities Child Development Center on South Main Street. A bookcase has just been filled with new and gently used books for young children—infants to 5-year-olds—and one of the walls holds four built-in rows of books. All are within reach of children who come in.

"We're extremely excited to get this going," said Jennifer Caraballo, the center's director. "Books usually come from our own money, so this Book Place is saving us money and is very beneficial for the community."

The new Book Place is one of two that Read to Grow has opened in Waterbury. Read to Grow now has 30 Book Places throughout the state. All of the host sites are nonprofits that allow both their clients and other families in their communities to visit and choose free children's books to keep.

Many Book Places are situated in Family Resource Centers, child development centers, community health clinics, and other agencies serving families. Each has at least one bookcase, which is replenished regularly by Read to Grow. Each also offers information for parents and childcare-givers on how to promote early language skills and literacy of children.

On this summer day, children and their parents are here for different services, including year-round school readiness programs and daycare for infants and toddlers. The center is in a central location and along a bus route.

For a complete listing of Book Places, visit our website: www.readtogrow.org.
By Christina Cerillo

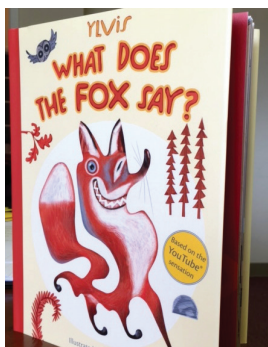


Sisters Adriana (left) and Alyana Lagares select books at the new Book Place in Waterbury

GIFTS BECOME BOOKS

With your help, families like those at Catholic Charities Child Development Center get books they can't afford to buy.

At the Waterbury center, 47 of the 56 families receiving services today live at or below the poverty line. More than half are Hispanic, and many of them would like bilingual books for their young children.



Simon & Schuster Supplies Much Needed Books

"What Does the Fox Say?"

So asks the title of a children's book published by Simon & Schuster and based on a popular YouTube video.

Read to Grow responds: "Thank you!"

Simon & Schuster gave 1,000 copies of the book and 49,500 other new children's books to Read to Grow over the last year.

These gifts could not be more appreciated—both by Read to Grow staff and by the children who have received them. Over the last two years, the distribution of new and gently used books has jumped from about 125,000 a year to approximately 190,000. And the demand is growing, largely due to the Book Places and Partnerships that Read to Grow has set up with other nonprofits since mid-2014. The two types of collaborations target low-income families, providing them with information on early childhood literacy and free children's books.

Today "What Does the Fox Say?" has become a favorite book of Read to Grow staff in their workshops for families enrolled in Head Start. The workshops are given as part of Read to Grow's Partnership with the Connecticut Food Bank.

NEWSLETTER OF READ TO GROW

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New Development Associate at Read to Grow



Paula Grimm (left) and Tina Silidker

Paula Grimm has joined the Read to Grow staff as the new Development Associate. A Branford resident, she takes over from Tina Silidker, who retired in August.

Tina focused on development work over the last 13 years after volunteering for Read to Grow for a year.

"This is bittersweet," she said of her departure, "because I'm so passionate about the mission and enjoy my co-workers so much. But I want to take time now for other experiences."

Paula joins Read to Grow after seven years at Yale University where she reviewed grants for the Pathology Department. She has also been with RETEC Corporation and IBM, where she worked as a computer programmer. She is a graduate of the College of the Holy Cross.

She and her husband, who is principal of Calvin Leete School in Guilford, have three daughters.

Paula said she looks forward to the work ahead, which includes grant-writing and reports and helping in Read to Grow events and appeals.

"I think it's going to be challenging, but I am committed to the mission," she said. "I've never felt this excited about work before."

IKEA Challenge Award To Help New Prenatal Project

IKEA New Haven awarded the top prize in its annual Life Improvement Challenge to Read to Grow.

That award—given after public, online voting last spring for various nonprofits and their projects—meant Read to Grow received this summer \$12,800 worth of IKEA merchandise for the initiative to reach pregnant women receiving care at community health centers and primary care clinics. The initiative is intended to impress upon mothers-to-be the importance of nurturing their babies through development of their language skills. The initiative also

provides free children's books.

The IKEA merchandise includes shelving and bookcases for the health centers and clinics; bins and other containers for the pregnant women to keep for storing children's books at home; and IKEA children's books.

"We focus on supporting organizations that aim to provide children with a better start in life," said Jeffrey Zeitlin, Customer Relations Manager of IKEA New Haven. "The mission of Read to Grow is in total alignment with our objective. We are pleased that the winning organization embodies

such a passion to promote language skills and literacy for children, beginning at birth."

At Read to Grow, Elizabeth Cech coordinates the prenatal initiative. "The books and bins we received from IKEA's Life Improvement Challenge will give the women in prenatal care a great start to building their children's reading library. We're so thankful for the contribution to this important project."

Since implementing the Life Improvement Challenge in 2011, IKEA U.S. has supported over 200 charities with IKEA products, design and employee assistance.

A Capitol Effort

Connecticut legislators delivered more than 300 children's books to Read to Grow in July after collections were held at the state Capitol and Legislative Office Building.

Senators Ted Kennedy, Jr. (District 12), Martin Looney (Senate President, District 11) and Len Fasano (Senate Minority Leader-District 34) personally delivered the books to Read to Grow's Branford office.

The books were collected over the winter and spring. Teri Gavigan, Executive Assistant at the General Assembly and a Westbrook resident, organized the collections.

Elizabeth Cech, the Books for Babies coordinator, receives donated books from Connecticut legislators, from left to right: Sens. Ted Kennedy, Jr., Len Fasano and Martin Looney.



Visit us at
www.readtogrow.org

www.readtogrow.org Our New Online Look and Content Are Up

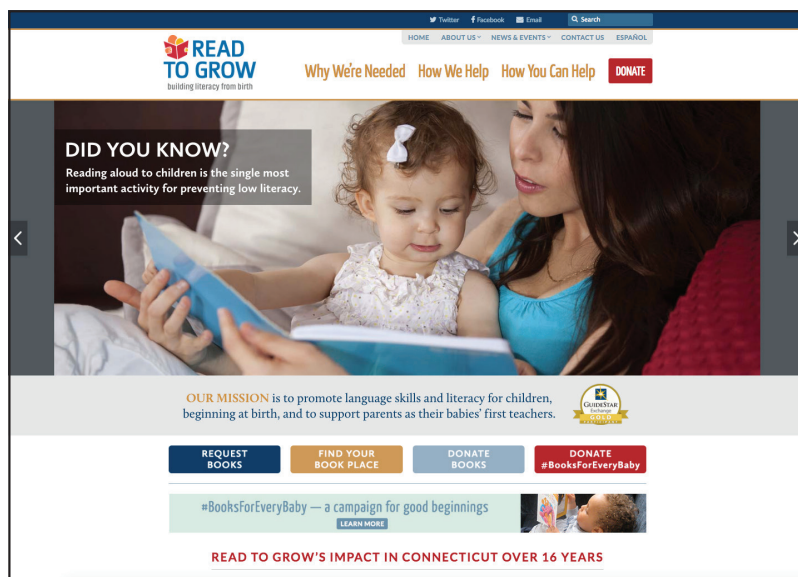
Check it out!

Read to Grow's new website provides easy access to our services and features our new logo.

The site, designed by Bulldog Studios of Madison:

- succinctly explains our work and how and why we do it;
- showcases "buttons" to request free books, volunteer, locate a Book Place, organize a book drive, and/or make a donation;
- presents the significant ways in which Read to Grow is growing, collaborating with nonprofits, and responding to needs of children and families throughout Connecticut.

The website is optimized for mobile devices for access anytime, anywhere.



NEED SURPASSES OUR SUPPLY

The demand for bilingual books has gone up 3,400% in the last 18 months! Today Read to Grow gives more than 34,000 Spanish-English books for young kids. In early 2015, we were asked for only about 1,000 a year.

Help us meet a soaring demand. Gracias!