

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

Let's Toast to a Milestone, Honor Our Founder

It's our 20th year, and we'd like you to join our celebration.

On Thursday evening, October 3 at the New Haven Lawn Club, we'll honor Roxanne J. Coady as Founder and Board Chair Emeritus of Read to Grow. From 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., the cocktail event will feature guest speakers and the formal announcement of the Roxanne J. Coady Legacy Fund for Children's Literacy.

Roxanne started our nonprofit with a single-minded cause: to ensure there would be a book for every baby born in Connecticut. With a group of equally passionate friends and a dedicated Board of Directors, Roxanne established an organization that today has given more than 1.8 million books to children in the State of Connecticut. Over the years,

she recruited and helped to develop an energetic staff. They, in turn, have brought in hundreds of tireless volunteers who have helped to make Read to Grow a vital agency in literacy development in our state.

Read to Grow has 74 partnerships, from those with Connecticut Food Bank and The Diaper Bank to ones with hospitals, community health centers, and Save the Children.

Over the years, our mission has remained consistent: to support language skills and literacy for children, beginning at birth, and to support parents as their babies' first teachers.

We look forward to honoring Roxanne for her vision and leadership. We hope you'll attend. For information on making

reservations or becoming an event sponsor, please contact Robin Baker at 203.488.6800, or email: events@readtogrow.org, or go to our website: readtogrow.org/20years.

We thank Citizens Bank, our Platinum Sponsor, for supporting this event:

 **Citizens Bank®**



CHET Baby Scholars Cards Now in All Our Literacy Packets

By Kathy Williams

Books for Babies Coordinator

Exciting news to share!

Cards explaining the CHET Baby Scholars education savings plan will be provided to parents of newborns at all of our 14 partner hospitals starting this fall.

This represents a significant increase from the six hospitals that have been receiving the CHET information over the last four years.

The number of newborns' families who will be getting information through our Books for Babies program's literacy packets will increase from 6,900 to 21,300 a year. The colorful, sturdy-stock cards fit into our glassine packets, along with new copies of the "Welcome to the World!" baby book and our First Guide for Parents of Newborns.

Ann Zaaier is a volunteer for Read to Grow at the Saint Raphael campus of Yale New Haven Hospital. She talks with mothers of newborns about our packets, which have included CHET cards since 2015. A typical response from them, she said, is, "Awesome! I wish I knew about this when I had my other kids!"

CHET (Connecticut Higher Education Trust) Baby Scholars is a savings plan that the State of Connecticut created about five years ago to encourage families with infants and

toddlers to begin saving for their children's education after high school. The program is administered through the Connecticut Office of the State Treasurer.

The program provides up to \$250 from the state toward a child's future college costs. It works in this way: once a baby is enrolled in CHET Baby Scholars within the first year of birth, the state automatically deposits \$100 into her or his account. If at least an additional \$150 is deposited into the account by family and/or friends by the child's fourth birthday, the state will give another \$150 to match. Contributions to the account from family and friends can continue through the years.

"Read to Grow is happy to encourage Connecticut families to begin saving for their young children's education as soon as possible," said Marguerite Alpert, who manages the Books for Babies program. "CHET Baby Scholars promotes learning and that beautifully complements our mission."



TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARD
your baby's future education!

ELIGIBILITY:

- Enrollment needs to occur before the child's first birthday, and the child must reside in Connecticut
- Each child can only have one CHET Baby Scholars enrollment; for example, only one parent, grandparent, or other loved one can enroll for that child
- Adopted children are eligible as well, regardless of age (sign up within the first year after adoption)

For full details and instructions on how to enroll, visit us online at www.aboutchet.com/babyscholarsRTG, or call a CHET representative at (866) 269-1226.

Tenth Partner Joins Our Prenatal Project

By Marguerite Alpert
Books for Babies Coordinator

Our community of literacy continues to grow! We are pleased to announce the addition of a new partner in our Prenatal Project: Day Kimball Medical Group OB/GYN in the northeast corner of Connecticut. Their two locations, one at the hospital in Putnam and one in Plainfield, serve 300 pregnant women a year.

Through all of our 10 partnerships in the Prenatal Project, Read to Grow expects to serve more than 2,200 women getting obstetrical care at Day Kimball Medical Group, community health centers, and clinics during fiscal year 2020.

With the Prenatal Project, medical staff gives pregnant women information about early childhood literacy and new, free baby books. OB patients learn about the development of language skills of babies and how parents are their children's first teachers.

Cherise Kearney, Director of Operations of Day Kimball Medical Group, said, "We are fortunate to be able to provide this exciting new program to our OB patients. Their response to getting the new books has been very positive."

Many of the patients who receive their obstetric care through Day Kimball Medical Group will give birth at Day Kimball Hospital, where Read to Grow has had a partnership since 2012. The nursing staff on the maternity unit talk to mothers of newborns about the contents of our free literacy packets, each of which includes a new baby book, a First Guide for Parents of Newborns, a CHET (Connecticut Higher Education Trust) Baby Scholars card explaining an education savings plan, and a reply card. Families who fill out and return the reply cards, or fill them out online, receive two more free children's books in the mail when



their babies are 3 months and 12 months old.

For our Prenatal Project, Read to Grow has nine other partnerships:

- two in Hartford: Connecticut Children's and Charter Oak Health Center;
- one in East Hartford: First Choice Health Centers;
- one in West Hartford: UCONN Health Parenting Program;
- three in New Haven: Fair Haven Community Health Center, Cornell Scott-Hill Health Corporation, and Women's Center at Yale Primary Care Clinic;
- two in Bridgeport: Optimus Health Center and Southwest Community Health Center.

"Once expectant moms learn that their babies can hear their voice at 20 weeks gestation, they're excited to build home libraries for their babies before they're born," said Kathy Williams, Books for Babies Coordinator. "Our Prenatal Project gives them a jump-start on that with free books and helpful literacy information."

BOOK DRIVE

It all adds up!

New books donated to Read to Grow

+

Gently used books donated to
Read to Grow

=

Much needed books to give to children
who do not have books at home

Check out our website, or
give us a call for more ideas for
running a book drive this fall!
readtogrow.org | 203.488.6800

NEWSLETTER OF READ TO GROW

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Volunteer Spotlight



SUSAN MOHER

Susan Moher has no trouble explaining her attraction to Read to Grow.

"I wanted to be a part of enabling kids throughout the state to know the magic of reading and be inspired. Books were always an important part of my life growing up, and I instilled that love of reading in my (two) sons."

Susan has been volunteering for the Books for Kids program for about two years. Before she and her husband moved from Glastonbury

to Branford, she worked for 13 years as a substitute teacher in the Glastonbury schools. Once on the shoreline, she wanted to find a place where she could use her skills and knowledge, a place "whose work seemed important" and that shared her values.

She began by coming to the office for a few hours on Monday afternoons and has added Thursday mornings to her schedule. She has become a member of the team of dedicated, experienced teachers and librarians who make our Books for Kids program possible.

Stickers on Our Books Lead Families to Opportunities

By Evelyn Tomasello

Books for Kids Co-Coordinator

When Wendy Velez, her husband and their two daughters moved to East Haven from North Carolina last fall, one of the first connections to their new



Sisters Genevieve (left) and Georgette Mendoza enjoy getting books at our Book Place.

community was made through stickers on the back covers of two children's books.

Wendy's young daughters, Genevieve and Georgette Mendoza, were each given a book by their aunt, who has lived in Connecticut for several years. She had attended an event at an East Haven school where free books from Read to Grow were given out.

The book stickers made Wendy curious. She decided to drop by our Branford office and warehouse, which is close to where her husband now works. At Read to Grow, she was greeted by our staff and spoke with our bilingual Books for Kids (BFK) Coordinator, who explained our Book Place. The Book Place at our office is one of 34 across the state. We have partnered with 33 other nonprofits serving families to set up new bookshelves that we continually stock with children's books. The selections of gently used and new books are free to the nonprofits' clients and others in their communities so they can build their own children's home libraries.

At Read to Grow's Book Place, Wendy not

only picked up more books for her daughters, she learned about choosing the right books for children of different ages and interests. She also made connections to other resources for her family in the shoreline area.

"We have good conversations here," said Linda Sylvester, a BFK Coordinator. "They're not only looking for books, they're looking for advice."

Delighted by her first visit, Wendy said, "This place is amazing. My daughters are going to love it here, because they love to read."

The following week, Wendy came back with 7-year-old Genevieve and 4-year-old Georgette. They smiled from ear to ear. They now visit our Book Place frequently.

Last year, our BFK volunteers stickered more than 140,000 books that went to families statewide. Our Books for Babies (BFB) program gave over 23,000 books. Our third program, Early Steps to School Success, also distributed free books in New Haven.

Early Steps to School Success Welcomes 4th School to Program

A fourth public school joins our Early Steps to School Success-New Haven program this academic year.

The free program, which Read to Grow recently started in partnership with Save the Children, works with New Haven families to provide them the knowledge and skills to prepare their young children for success in kindergarten.

The four Coordinators with our Early Steps program are each based at a different elementary school in the city. From their schools, they make regular home-visits to families with children from newborn up to age 3. At their schools, they hold monthly Parent-Child Play Groups, which build the social-emotional skills of the children and give opportunities for parents to connect with one another and the school system.

Also at the schools, Coordinators enroll 3- and 4-year-olds in weekly book bag exchanges and read-alouds.

While equipping parents with skills to nurture their children's

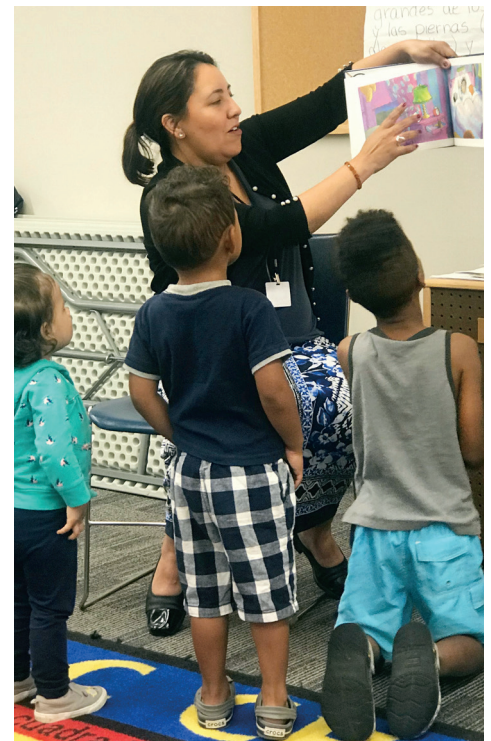
language and literacy skills, Early Steps also aims to increase awareness in the community and among civic leaders and organizations about the importance of healthy early childhood development.

To launch the Early Steps program last winter, three Coordinators began working at these New Haven schools: Quinnipiac STEM; Celentano; and Lincoln Bassett. As planned, a fourth school—Truman School in the city's west side—has just been added.

The Early Steps program was first established by Save the Children 12 years ago in rural areas across the country.

The program in New Haven, while following the same curricula and system set up by Save the Children, is managed and funded by Read to Grow.

For more information on how families can enroll in this free program, contact: Kyn Tolson at Read to Grow (ktolson@readtogrow.org)



Bilingual Coordinator Viviana Nunez at a Parent-Child Play Group this summer in Fair Haven. During the school year, Viviana works from Quinnipiac STEM, an elementary school in the city's Fair Haven community.

Coordinators in the Early Steps to School Success program and the New Haven schools where they work are (from left to right): Cherese Chambers, at Lincoln Bassett; Melissa Ruggiero, at Celentano; and Lourdes Marcano, at Truman.



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Library Cards for New Parents Delivered through Partnership in New Haven

The New Haven Free Public Library (NHFPL) and Read to Grow have formed a partnership to put library cards into the hands of new parents throughout New Haven.

Read to Grow distributes the new NHFPL cards and accompanying bilingual postcards to expecting parents. Pregnant women who are city residents and receive obstetrical care at Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center, Fair Haven Community Health Center, and Women's Center at Yale New Haven Primary Care Clinic should get the cards.

Each library card is valid for at least one year and offers access to online resources at NHFPL, including e-books, music and videos. Each postcard includes the five NHFPL locations and contact information, along with encouragement for adults to visit a library branch and upgrade their cards to full-service library cards.

"We are thrilled to promote the practice of whole family reading and look forward to sharing our collections and regular story time hours with new parents," said Martha Brogan, City Librarian.

"The goals of the library system and Read to Grow dovetail perfectly," said Kyn Tolson, Executive Director at Read to Grow. "We want more people to have access to the worlds of knowledge, enchantment and fun that books and libraries offer. These special cards open the door."



5 Ways **YOU CAN HELP:**

- ✓ Donate gently used or new children's books
- ✓ Sign up to volunteer at our Branford office
- ✓ Make a donation
- ✓ Organize a book drive
- ✓ Ask about volunteering with our hospital program

For more information, go to our website: readtogrow.org

Or scan here:



Or email us at:
readtogrow@readtogrow.org

THANK YOU!