

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

From Yale-New Haven Hospital

Pediatricians with REACH Take Part in Read to Grow Workshops

A collaboration between a doctors' residency training program at Yale-New Haven Hospital and Read to Grow brings in pediatricians to our Branford office to learn more about early childhood literacy.

REACH (Resident Education and Advocacy in Community Health) for doctors in their second and third years of residency began at Hospital of St. Raphael in 2008. It has since been incorporated in the Yale-New Haven Hospital residency training. The purpose of REACH is to have doctors visit community programs to learn about and better understand their patients' challenges and the resources available to them.

Dr. Eliza Bullis, chief resident currently in charge of REACH, said, "It's so important for doctors to have a more holistic understanding of patients, their families and communities."

About 75 pediatricians with REACH have come to Read to Grow over the years. Each has had an hour-long, one-on-one workshop with a Book for Babies staffer.

"We've been greatly impressed with the interest and enthusiasm of the pediatricians," said Diane Visconti, Books for Babies associate. "And they tell us they've learned more about the importance of early reading."

Dr. Bullis concurred, adding that the feedback has been "overwhelmingly positive."

After her workshop at Read to Grow, Dr. Swati Antala said, "As someone who always loved to read, I am happy that, as a pediatrician, I can let parents and children know not only how enjoyable reading is but also how important to a child's development. I am thankful for Read to Grow and other literacy organizations that help spread this important message."

At our Branford office, the doctors hear about early brain development and the importance of parents building their babies' language skills from "day one." They are shown simple but engaging ways to help parents become their infants' first teachers.

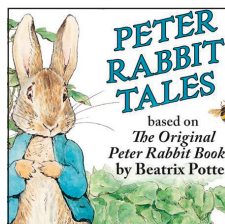
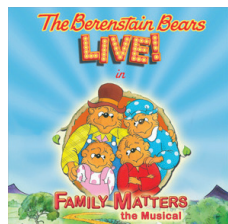
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Dr. Laura White, a third-year pediatric resident at Yale-New Haven Hospital, visits Read to Grow as part of REACH training.

Shubert and Read to Grow Partner Up

Giving New Life for Children's Stories on Stage



A children's book turned into a play for stage can bring literature and the arts together in marvelous ways. It might spark new life in an old favorite, introduce children to an unfamiliar classic, or simply bring a family together for fun on a Saturday afternoon.

Today, after the Shubert in New Haven reached out to Read to Grow in 2014, the two have developed a special relationship. Each supports the other's work. At every

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Our Annual Reports and Appreciations

Please see pages 3 through 6 for our annual report and treasurer's report for the 2014-15 fiscal year, and for appreciations to donors and book drive organizers. We are grateful to them all. They make our work possible and have helped to change the lives of hundreds of thousands of children and families over the years.

In Our Circle of Friends

An evening celebration in October at the Guilford Yacht Club was the kick-off event for our Circle of Friends.

The new Circle of Friends designation acknowledges our generous and longtime donors. The complimentary event last fall was held in appreciation of their support.

The cocktail-hour gathering featured a talk by Annie Murphy Paul, author of “Origins: How the Nine Months before Birth Shape Our Lives” and a TED Talks presenter.

The initial members of our Circle of Friends (as denoted in the Annual Report listing) include: corporations and businesses that have made generous donations, excluding grants, over a three-year period (Corporate Circle); individuals who have given significantly over a three-year period (Gold Circle); and individuals who have donated \$100 or more in each of the last five years (Sustaining Circle).

Pictured here are some of about 60 guests at the October 8th event.



Annie Murphy Paul, speaker for the event and from New Haven



Virginia Van Dyk and Ginger Gillespie, both with the Hartford Hospital Auxiliary, and Priscilla Russo and Diane Visconti, both with our Books for Babies program



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NEWSLETTER OF READ TO GROW

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REACH PEDIATRICIANS

(Continued from page 1)

They also learn about the resources that Read to Grow and other agencies provide to both families and health-care providers. Read to Grow supplies them with folders of articles and research about early childhood literacy and tip sheets they can pass along to their patients.

After her visit to Read to Grow last year, Dr. Vicky Reichman arranged with her supervisor, Dr. Jasprett Loyal, for pediatric residents at Yale-New Haven to coordinate their hospital visits on the maternity unit with our Babies for Babies volunteers working there. The linking of the doctor visits with our volunteer visits aims to reinforce the importance of early childhood literacy instruction.

—By Diane Visconti

GIVING NEW LIFE FOR CHILDREN'S STORIES ON STAGE

(Continued from page 1)

reading the book and conducting craft activities with children and their families. At the end of the program, each child can choose a book, donated by Read to Grow, to take home. Said a staff member, “The kids and parents had a blast.”

The upcoming plays in the Children's Series are: *The Berenstain Bears LIVE!* on February 27 and *Peter Rabbit Tales* on April 23. For each play, there are two Saturday performances. The free library workshops—open to the public—are scheduled well in advance and are posted on the Shubert's website.

Prior performances in the series include *Clifford the Big Red Dog Live!* last fall.

The collaboration between the Shubert and Read to Grow came about two years ago when Kelly Wuzzardo, Director of Education and

Outreach Initiatives for the theater, contacted Read to Grow. “The impetus for working (together) came from *Matilda*,” said Wuzzardo. “As a musical based on a book about a girl who loves to read, it was a natural connection for us to look for a partner like Read to Grow.”

“Read to Grow has strong ties to folks in the New Haven area,” said Linda Sylvester, Books for Kids Coordinator at Read to Grow. “It's wonderful to collaborate with the Shubert and local libraries to bring books to children in the area, and to raise awareness in families of the importance of reading and the mission of our organization.”

For more information about the shows, please call: 203.562.5666 or 888.736.2663, or visit: www.shubert.com.

—By Linda Sylvester



We thank all our donors in the last fiscal year (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2015) and give special acknowledgment to those in our new Circle of Friends. This recognition includes the Corporate Circle (CC), the Gold Circle (GC) and the Sustaining Circle (SC).

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Daniel Geirin
Carole Guimond
Hartford Hospital Auxiliary
Highland Elementary School
Hotchkiss School
Impact Trumbull
Interact Club of Stamford

Jane Ryan School
Jared Eliot Middle School
Cathy Johnson
K.I.D.S.
Killingworth Elementary School
Kiwanis Club of Fairfield
Lauralton Hill
Long Lots Elementary School
Long Meadow Elementary School
Lyman Orchards
Mary E. Griswold School
Mary R. Tisko School
McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP
McGee Middle School
Memorial Elementary School

Middlebrook Elementary School
Mile Creek School
Mystic Middle School
Notre Dame High School
Pleasant Valley Elementary
Pleasant Valley United
Methodist Church
Ms. Gabriella Prizio
R.J. Julia Booksellers
Jordana Raich
Rain of Hope
Read School
Rock Cats
Rock Hill Elementary School
Roton Middle School
Karen Seligson

Sikorski Aircraft
Tashua Elementary School
Philip DeLise & Johar Varma
The Healthy Child
Independent Day School
Timothy Edwards Middle School
Trumbull Impact
Walter C. Polson Middle School
Melanie Ward
Westport Co-op Nursery School
Willard Elementary School
Women's Athletic Initiative
Woodside Intermediate School



A MESSAGE FROM JEFF HARTMANN, TREASURER

The 2014–15 fiscal year was one of accomplishment and celebration.

To mark our 15th year, a celebration event was held last April at Saint Clements Castle in Portland that highlighted the contributions of 15 champions of children from across the state. Honorees ranged from Connecticut’s Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood Myra Jones-Taylor to Chelsea Fitzgerald, an elementary school student from Wallingford who runs annual book drives to benefit Read to Grow.

Along with acknowledging our friends and others who have advanced the cause of young children and their families, Read to Grow moved forward to strengthen our two flagship programs—Books for Babies and Books for Kids.

Two new initiatives within Books for Kids, both of which focus on delivering children’s books and early childhood literacy education to families who live in need, took root and flourished in 2014–15. With grants to support these projects, we opened more than 20 Book Places and formed a dozen community-based partnerships. Both initiatives call for forming collaborations with other nonprofits that already serve low-income and at-risk families.

Near the end of the fiscal year, we were delighted to receive news that Simon & Schuster would be giving us more than 21,000 new children’s books. Their gift was significant in light of an increased demand for our books created by the new Book Places and Partnerships. Simon & Schuster has already notified us of a follow-up donation of 15,000 children’s books coming this winter.

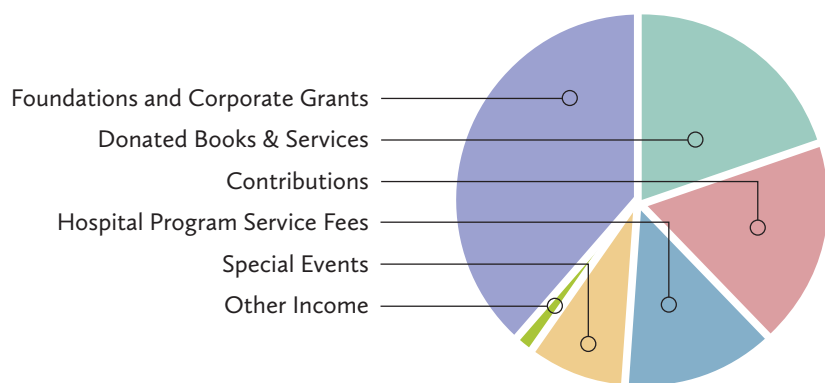
As part of our efforts to acknowledge our supporters, we announced plans to create the Circle of Friends. This new designation has become an appreciation of generous and steadfast donors to Read to Grow.

By the end of fiscal 2015, we focused on a new strategic initiative within the Books for Babies program. Our prenatal intervention project will take Read to Grow to community health centers and primary care clinics to reach expectant women. In this “earliest touch point,” we intend to reach mothers-to-be with childhood literacy information, resources and baby books so that they are both ready and equipped to become their babies’ first and most important teachers.

Lastly, I am happy to report for fiscal year 2014–15, Read to Grow once again received an unqualified, or clean audit opinion from our external auditors, Murphy & Company, LLC.

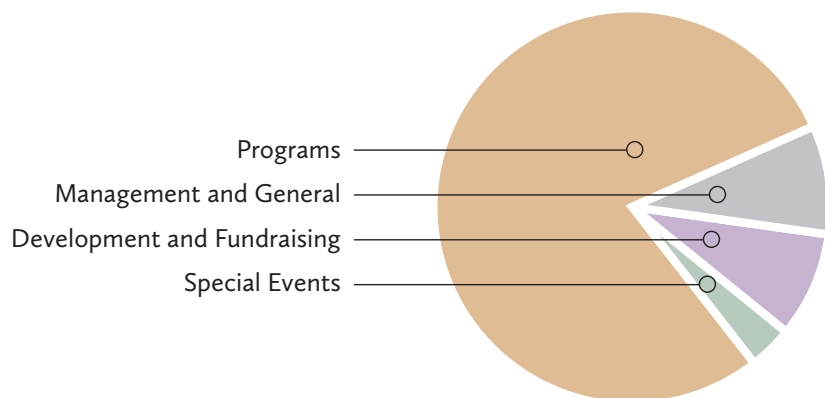
PUBLIC SUPPORT & REVENUES

Foundations and Corporate Grants	\$ 309,410
Special Events	158,800
Donated Books and Services	146,890
Contributions	106,705
Hospital Program Service Fees	70,000
Other Income	12,257
Total Public Support and Revenues	\$ 804,062



FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

Programs	\$ 649,601
Management and General	73,176
Development and Fundraising	70,950
Special Events	29,181
Total Expenses	822,908
Decrease in Net Assets	\$ -18,846



Program expenses account for 79% of total expenses

A Change of Coordinators in Books for Babies Program

New Books for Babies Coordinator Elizabeth “Buffy” Cech takes over supervision of Read to Grow’s flagship program from Priscilla Russo in February.

Priscilla, who created the Books for Babies program, beginning in the year 2000 at Yale-New Haven Hospital, is retiring after more than 15 years at Read to Grow and 37 years of neo-natal nursing before that.



Elizabeth Cech (left) and Priscilla Russo

“It’s been an amazing journey,” Priscilla said. “Working with an exceptional staff, an enthusiastic group of dedicated, knowledgeable volunteers and our Read to Grow families has been an extraordinary privilege.”

As for her plans, Priscilla added, “That’s the beauty of retirement, isn’t it? To have no plans at all on any given day, or to fill the day to the brim with travel, family, good deeds, or reading a book on my bucket list.”

Buffy, a pediatric registered nurse who lives in West Hartford, comes to the new job with more than 25 years of experience in hospitals, clinics and private practice. Along with her part-time post at Read to Grow, she will continue working at ProHealth Physicians as an after-hours triage nurse in Farmington and at their Children’s Medical Group in Bloomfield.

Buffy’s interest and skills extend to strategic planning and logistics, both areas that will strengthen Read to Grow’s expansion

into prenatal interventions. In this new initiative, we will connect with primary care clinics and community health centers to bring early childhood literacy to pregnant women.

Buffy will work closely with Diane Visconti, the Books for Babies Associate.

Through the Books for Babies program, Read to Grow is partnered with 12 hospitals where we deliver more than 21,000 Literacy Packets to newborns and their mothers on maternity units every year.

“I’m very excited about my new position and look forward to supporting the Books for Babies program with Diane,” Buffy said. “In the few weeks I’ve been here, I’ve tried to learn as much as possible about the program Priscilla created and cultivated. Her dedication to and love for the program are infectious, and she’ll be a hard act to follow.”

Buffy, who is the mother of three, received her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from the University of Virginia.

Cheshire Pulls Together for Town-wide Book Drive

A Thanksgiving book drive across the town of Cheshire last November brought in more than 3,900 new and gently used books for Read to Grow.

Organizers of the drive were Herbert “Herb” Jay Rosenfield, a clinical social worker and director of Adolescent & Family Counseling Center, and Sherry Stekloff, a volunteer with Read to Grow at Middlesex Hospital. The drive ran November 15–30.

Participants helping to rally donors and hosting book collection sites included schools, community agencies and other nonprofits, and businesses.

“I was very impressed with the number of participants and their willingness to help,” said Sherry.

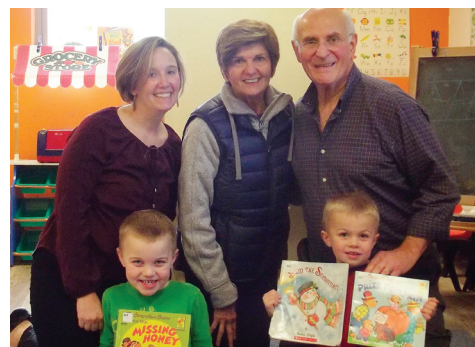
The participants were: Doodlebugz Child Learning Center; Cheshire Kindercare; Cheshire Nursery School; Cheshire Community YMCA Child Care Center;

Bunny Village Child Development Center; First Congregational Church Day Care and Nursery; Happy Time School; Darcey School; Chapman School; Doolittle School; Highland School; Norton School; Cheshire Academy Health Center; Cheshire YMCA; Cheshire Parks and Recreation; and Adolescent & Family Counseling Center.

Herb also ran a book drive for Read to Grow in 2012. He has been motivated, he said, by a report about the disparity between the vocabularies of children from low-income families entering kindergarten and those from families with higher incomes.

“I was shocked to hear that some of that gross disparity resulted from an absence of books to read and the lack of parental role-modelling on the importance of reading,” he said.

At Read to Grow, Linda Sylvester, Books for Kids Program Coordinator, said, “We



Cheshire book drive participants (left to right, back row): Chrissy Cassesse, director of YMCA Preschool Daycare Center; Sherry Stekloff, Read to Grow volunteer; and Herbert Jay Rosenfield, director of Adolescent & Family Counseling Center. (Front row) Brothers Mark and John Labowsky also helped out.

appreciate Herb’s strong desire to help reduce this language deficit. He’s already offered to organize another book drive, and we hope his efforts and success will motivate other communities to do the same.”

—By Evelyn Tomasello

Ready for a Drive?

We welcome all book drives and donations — big, small and in between!

Read to Grow thrives on gifts of gently used (and new) children’s books. They account for most of the 180,000+ books we deliver to families, nonprofits, doctors, teachers, and many others every year.

If you or a group you belong to would like to collect books for Read to Grow, please contact us (Linda Sylvester at: 203.488.6800; lsylvester@readtogrow.org), or visit our website for more information (www.readtogrow.org).

A Helping Hand from NEMG

Northeast Medical Group (NEMG) is conducting a two-week book drive, March 7–18, among more than 100 physician practices in Connecticut.

The book drive—to benefit children and families served through Read to Grow—is one of NEMG’s outreach projects aimed at giving back to the communities their network serves.

NEMG is part of Yale New Haven Health System. It is affiliated with Yale-New Haven, Bridgeport and Greenwich hospitals and is part of 100 physician practices across Connecticut and New York’s Westchester County.



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The Power of our Books for Babies...

We conducted two surveys to find out what families think of our Books for Babies program on maternity units of 12 Connecticut hospitals, where we reach about 22,000 mothers annually. In this program, we deliver free Literacy Packets to mothers of all newborns. (Each packet has: new book for newborn; literacy guide for parents; reply card to be in our Follow-Up that gives more free books; info on CHET Baby Scholars.)

Also in the hospitals, volunteers visit briefly with mothers to talk about early childhood literacy and Literacy Packet contents.

Survey 1 Results

Here's what 6,849 mothers told us in our initial survey:

- **97%** looked at our Literacy Packets
- **94%** found our *First Guide for Parents of Newborns* useful
- **79%** learned about baby development
- **85%** learned ways to help a baby learn
- **81%** learned about importance of reading to a baby
- **78%** learned how to read to a baby
- **72%** read with their babies at least once a day
- **15%** read with their babies more than once a week
- **10%** read with their babies once a week
- **1%** never read with their babies

Survey 2 Results

For longer-range effects of our program, a second survey was taken among families whose children are now between the ages of 3 and 8. Here's what 199 families told us:

First Guide for Parents of Newborns was informative and useful:

- | | |
|----------------|-----|
| • Yes | 65% |
| • Somewhat | 17% |
| • No | <1% |
| • Don't recall | 16% |

A family member shared books with my child from birth to 3:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| • More than once daily | 59.7% |
| • Once daily | 23.1% |
| • More than once weekly | 9.5% |
| • Once weekly | 2% |
| • Twice monthly | 2% |
| • Rarely | 2% |
| • Never | 1% |

My child looks at, or reads books independently:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| • More than once daily | 51.2% |
| • Once daily | 26.6% |
| • More than once weekly | 16.5% |
| • Less often | 4% |

Sharing books is important for my child's language skills, reading and learning:

- | | |
|------------|-------|
| • Yes | 98.9% |
| • Somewhat | <1% |
| • No | 0.0% |

Sharing books is important for my child's overall health:

- | | |
|------------|-------|
| • Yes | 94.9% |
| • Somewhat | 2.5% |
| • No | <1% |