

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

Baby Steps to Literacy at L+M Hospital

It sounds so simple. That's just the way that Hope Stevens, a volunteer at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital in New London, likes it. Hope is one of six volunteers with our Books for Babies program on the hospital's

maternity unit. She and the others visit with mothers of newborns to chat about the free literacy packets from Read to Grow that they receive. They talk about baby brain development and the easy but important

ways to daily engage and bond with their infants by sharing books.

When Lucero Zegarra, a New London resident, gave birth to her daughter, Penelope, she received a visit from Hope.

"We definitely plan to read to our child, in both English and Spanish," she said after their conversation. "It's good to hear about the importance of reading."

Books for Babies, which has been in L+M

since 2001, distributes about 1,400 literacy packets there every year. The program has been operating in Connecticut hospitals for 18 years.

During Hope's volunteer rounds on the maternity unit, she likes to show new parents computerized images of child brain synapses at different early stages of development.

"If you hold your child, read to your child, cuddle your child, you're a large part of those
(continued on page 8)



Lucero Zegarra of New London, with her baby, Penelope, meets with Hope Stevens, a volunteer at L+M Hospital with Read to Grow's Books for Babies program. Volunteers talk to mothers of newborns about the importance of sharing books with their young children during the first three years of life.

Our Annual Reports and Appreciations

On pages 3–6, you'll find our Annual Report and Treasurer's Report for the 2016–17 fiscal year. Also on those pages is our appreciation to donors and book-drive organizers.

COMMENTARY

Little Books Can Make a Big Difference

By Roxanne J. Coady

Editor's note: Roxanne Coady is CEO of RJ Julia Booksellers in Madison and founder and board chair of Read to Grow.

Imagine a home with no books, no magazines, no mail coming and going, not even conversations between parents and their children.

It's not far-fetched. It's the kind of home that could be around the corner or in a neighborhood you pass every day.

For many of us, becoming regular readers happened organically, like learning to eat. Our parents, our homes, our teachers, and our schools were infused with an excitement about books, talking and learning.

For children in low-income homes there often is not enough to create this rich environment. The ramifications can be devastating. Many young children start with the most basic of setbacks — what has been described as the "30 million word gap."

From birth to age 3, children from low-income homes have, on average, heard 30 million fewer words than have children from better-off neighborhoods. This disadvantage presents obvious challenges from the day they first walk into kindergarten. They simply lack basic language skills. The deficit deepens to their reading below grade level by third or fourth grade. Chances of school failure and dropping out spike. Achievements out of school become even more difficult.

What started as homes without basic enrichment becomes a community without the human resources needed for productivity and good health.

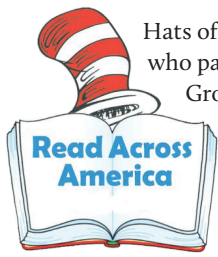
Read to Grow offers ways to avoid these outcomes. For 18 years, the Connecticut nonprofit has worked for early childhood literacy. We begin in community health centers, offering workshops and free books for
(continued on page 2)



**Hats off to the
young students
in our 2nd Annual
READ-A-THON!!!**

See page 2 for more details.

Hooray for Read-a-Thon Week!



Hats off to all the young students who participated in Read to Grow's second annual Read-a-Thon!

Children at a dozen elementary schools across Connecticut—from New London to

Shelton—logged in at least 15 minutes of daily reading at home (after school) during the week of Friday, February 23–Friday, March 2.

Every year, our Read-a-Thon culminates on national Read Across America Day,

established by the National Education Association to promote reading and to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss.

At the Connecticut schools participating in our Read-a-Thons, students are only asked to fill in reading log sheets and then hand in their sheets to teachers at week's end. They are also invited—not required—to donate gently used children's books and dollars, all for the benefit of other children supported by Read to Grow. We turn the students' donations into gifts for others who don't have books of their own at home.

Read-a-Thon students at schools with high participation earn wristbands. The school with the greatest percentage of students participating in the Read-a-Thon has a special Children's Book Author Event before the school year ends.

We invite more elementary schools to join in next year. It's a fun and meaningful way to promote reading at home.

Contact our office if you know of a school interested in our third annual Read-a-Thon in 2019: February 22–March 1. (203.488.6800; readtogrow@readtogrow.org)

COMMENTARY: LITTLE BOOKS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

(continued from page 1)

infants to women who are pregnant. We want them to have 'home libraries' even before their babies are born, and we want them to know the importance of daily habits of talking to and sharing books with their babies.

The work continues in hospitals—on maternity units. There, mothers of newborns receive literacy packets. With reply cards found in their packets, parents can enroll in our Follow-Up; they will receive more free books and literacy tips when their babies turn 3 months old and 1 year.

In the hospitals, Read to Grow now reaches about 61% of babies born in Connecticut. Our goal is 100%.

By beginning right before and right after birth—meeting with pregnant women and moms of newborns—Read to Grow starts an important process. It makes a difference. In

a survey of over 6,000 mothers who got our literacy packets, 81% of respondents said they learned about the importance of reading to their babies. Also, 72% reported reading with their babies at least once a day.

Lifelong readers can be made, even under adverse beginnings.

Our #BooksForEveryBaby campaign offers an easy opportunity for everyone to help in the mission of early childhood literacy. Just \$10 will provide a book to a newborn, a guide for the parents, and more free books to families who need them. Your help would mean so much.

If you'd like to join the campaign, simply go to readtogrow.org and click the red button "DONATE #BooksForEveryBaby" appearing under the panel of photos on the homepage. Thank you.

NEWSLETTER OF READ TO GROW

A publication of Read to Grow, Inc.
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www.readtogrow.org

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A Look at Some of the Faces behind the Books

CALLUM'S GIFT IS 156 BIRTHDAY BOOKS

Six-year-old Callum likes to make the most of his birthdays.



On his big day last fall—as in years past—Callum asked that any gifts be children's books that he could then give to Read to Grow. The South Glastonbury boy and his father delivered 156 new

books, most of which have already been given to children through our programs.

Callum's family learned about Read to Grow when he was born at Hartford Hospital, where his mother received our free literacy packet.

LOGAN DRISCOLL CARES

Teenager Logan Driscoll really does more than care. He takes action.

In work for a nonprofit that he founded, Logan donated 4,133 books in January to Read to Grow that he collected through book drives. He promises more.

The senior at Guilford High School said he is working with the Connecticut Association of Schools to get more schools around the state to join in his book drives for Read to Grow and New Haven Reads. He serves on the association's student board.

Logan does his volunteer efforts through the nonprofit Driscoll Cares. The agency grew from an idea he had about seven years ago, when he was in the hospital with injuries suffered in a baseball game. While there, he became aware of other children who seemed in much worse condition than he. "At that



moment I knew I wanted to give back and help others," he writes on the Driscoll Cares website.

Today Driscoll Cares helps public high school students in Connecticut fulfill a graduation requirement of community service by providing volunteer opportunities and projects.



We thank all our donors in the last fiscal year (July 1, 2016-June 30, 2017) and give special acknowledgement to those in our Circle of Friends. This recognition includes the Corporate Circle (CC), the Gold Circle (GC) and the Sustaining Circle (SC).

In the listings below, the designations of CC, GC and/or SC that follow names denote donors and their categories within our Circle of Friends.

The names of donors who gave "In Honor" or "In Memory" of someone will appear in those special categories near the end of the listings.

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IKEA
Kyn Tolson

MATCHING PLEDGES

Aetna Foundation
Avangrid
Crum & Forster
Dun & Bradstreet
Medtronic
Microsoft
Pfizer Foundation Matching Gifts Program
Stop & Shop Supermarket Company
United Health Group

IN HONOR GIFTS

In honor of David Andrews
Wallingford Public Library
Friends & Co-workers
In honor of Robin Baker
Mary Ellen Bushnell
In honor of Marian Barry
Laura & Edward Barry
In honor of Larry Bauman
Betty Lou Blumberg
In honor of Richard Bircher
Kelly Tunsky

In honor of Eva Black
Deb Rubenstein
In honor of Mark & Wendy Bluemling
Rosalie Carr
In honor of Paula Braverman
Betty Lou Blumberg
In honor of Frederic Brown
Eden & Howard Diamond
In honor of Calvin Leete Elementary School Staff
Paula & William Grimm
In honor of Matthew & Jacob Charney
Robin & Robert Charney
In honor of Lori Church
Paula & Tom McInerney
In honor of Roxanne Coady
Renee & Bruce McIntyre
Roslyn Milstein Meyer and Jerome Meyer Foundation
In honor of Alexa Colwell
Anne Marie Stern
In honor of Joanne Cunard
Debra Rostowsky
In honor of The Enfield Children
Kathy Ferrante, Susan Gray, Denise Thompson and Ann LoVoi
In honor of The FitzGerald Siblings
Sheila & John Haverkamp
In honor of Sharyn Frankel
Adrienne & Barry Gray
In honor of Maura Fruin
East School Faculty
In honor of Courtney, Alan & Reid Goodale
Eden & Howard Diamond
In honor of Beverly Hanscom
Abigail Wells
In honor of Jerry & Pat Hardison
Rebecca Armstrong
In honor of Callum Hayden
Evelyn Moss
In honor of Rita Hennessey
Sharon Mackinnel
In honor of Samantha Hoffman
Sib Spooner
In honor of Irv Kern
Eden & Howard Diamond
In honor of Kathy Koboski
Lorraine Stub
In honor of Lauren Arikor Korman
Dr. Walter & Diane Arikor
In honor of Don Levine
Karen Cohen
In honor of Dan Morgan
Deb Rubenstein
In honor of Patricia Perry
Ann Hruby
In honor of Ina Pitt
Adrienne & Barry Gray

In honor of Karen Pritzker
Roslyn Milstein Meyer and Jerome Meyer Foundation
In honor of Barbara & Robert Sequenzia
Elizabeth Hibino
In honor of Miriam Shartman
Adrienne & Barry Gray
In honor of Jenny Shieh
Marie Landry & Peter Aronson
In honor of Marilyn Silverman
Adrienne & Barry Gray
In honor of Ellen Sussman
Adrienne & Barry Gray
In honor of Joni Thomas
Carolyn Casey
Joanne Vercillo
In honor of Kyn Tolson
Kathleen Maher
In honor of Mr. and Mrs. John P. Valley
Kelly Tunsky
In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Tony Vaspasiano
Eden & Howard Diamond
In honor of Nancy Elizabeth Wallace
Mr. and Mrs. Cornelia Crowley
In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Brett Weiner
Eden & Howard & Eden Diamond
In honor of The Wilcoxson School Teachers
Heather & Jeffrey Youngquist

IN MEMORY GIFTS

In memory of Diana Balmori
Eleonora Andreeva
Judge & Mrs. Calabresi
Julia DeCola
Carl & Nancy Gewirtz Fund
William Goetzmann
Elizabeth Hausauer
Henry Masuoka
Carolann Morrissey
Laurence Ng
Donna Thompson
A. Defne Veral
Henry Wrotniak
In memory of Anna Bombaci
Linda & Jay Linda Polke
In memory of Carole Bright
Tonja Russo
In memory of Carol K. Dworken
Carol & Myron Dworken
In memory of Sidney & Rose Geringer
Barbara Gibson
In memory of Adam Gibson
Marcia Geringer
In memory of Ken Gutner
Jack & Helen Davis
In memory of Emily Hamilton
Linda Labbadia

In memory of Myrna Kagan
Marcia & Richard Witten
In memory of Teresa Lopez-Lebron
Academy of Aerospace & Engineering
David Anderson
Josefina Bayona
Barbara Daly-Byrnes
First Church Early Learning Center
Sheila Lamenzo
Open Choice Ladies
Resc Team Field Staff
Martha Stepnowski
Mr. & Mrs. William Westervelt
Teresa Wilson
In memory of William Lurie
Adrienne & Barry Gray
In memory of Virginia E. Mariotti
Cathy & John Seibyl
In memory of Sylvia Moore
Karen Cohen
In memory of Viola Ohlbaum
Terri & Bruce Alpert
Carly & Scott Casper
Deborah & William Friedman
Ellie Quagliaroli
In memory of Carmen Pace
Connie Catrone
In memory of Leonore Santucci
Norman Aldrich
Theresa Broadbin
Robert Campbell
Diana Roche
Jane Ryder
In memory of Guy and Sarah Sapiro
Janet & Richard Daigle
In memory of Rita Sawyer
Jane & John Labbe
In memory of Marilyn Selig
Eden & Howard Diamond
In memory of Richard Shelling
Judith Hahn
In memory of Irene Teller
Norma Barash
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Greenberg
In memory of Nick Tragakes
Jean Hunnicutt
In memory of Susan Gruskay Warford
Donna Lechner Gruskay & Jeff Gruskay
In memory of Bruce Wetjen
Amy Barry
In memory of Donald Zinn
Nancy Samuelson

If we have inadvertently omitted a name, printed a name incorrectly, or categorized any donor incorrectly, please accept our apologies. Please call us at 203.488.6800 so that we can correct our records.

BOOK DRIVE DONATIONS

500 BOOKS OR MORE
Ansonia High School
Avon Neighbor Helping Neighbor Project
Calvin Leete Elementary School
The Country School
Tracy Daly
Chelsea Fitzgerald

Girl Scouts of Connecticut
Noah Gordon
Haddam-Killingworth Middle School
Hartford Hospital Auxiliary
Highland Elementary School
Samantha Hofmann
IMPACTrumbull
The Independent Day School
Island Avenue Elementary School

Jane Ryan Elementary School
Junior League of Eastern Fairfield County
Claire Keanna
Kiwanis Club of Fairfield
Long Meadow Elementary School
Dani Lustberg
Madison Middle School
Manchester Memorial Hospital

McGee Middle School
Memorial Elementary School
National Organization of Professional Organizers
Northeast Medical Group
Notre Dame Church
Notre Dame High School
Alison Partridge
The Preschool of West Hartford

Roton Community Foundation
Saint Vincent's Medical Center
Sikorsky Aircraft
Abigail Sprinsky
St. George's Church
Tashua Elementary School
Trumbull High School
West Elementary School—New Canaan



A MESSAGE FROM JEFF HARTMANN, TREASURER

Read to Grow's two programs—Books for Babies and Books for Kids—continued their strong advancements in the 2016–17 fiscal year. Support from book donors, including individuals, foundations, and publishers such as Simon & Schuster, was essential to our robust activities and services.

A new van for Read to Grow has made our programs run even more smoothly. We purchased the Ram ProMaster, thanks entirely to a grant from Walmart. The van is used daily for book deliveries for our programs across the state and for book pickups from donors.

Other notable grant awards came from United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, Pitney Bowes, The Community Foundation of Greater New Haven, and Seedlings Foundation.

Two book author events, featuring Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in New Haven and Carly Simon in Madison, were among the year's highlights.

We were grateful for many sponsorships for the New Haven event, which included those from Citizens Bank; McInerney Family Foundation; The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven; Accel; The Safety Zone; The Hartmann Group; Hy's Limousine; Seedlings Foundation; Suzio-York Hill; Updike, Kelly & Spellacy; and Yale New Haven Health. Sponsors donated blocks of their tickets so that high school students could attend the event at College Street Music Hall and could also receive free copies of Abdul-Jabbar's book *Coach Wooden and Me*.

Carly Simon drew people from far and wide. The audience for the lively Sunday afternoon event in November included travelers from Wisconsin and Florida.

The strength of our programs is reflected by these high watermarks reached in the 2016–17 fiscal year:

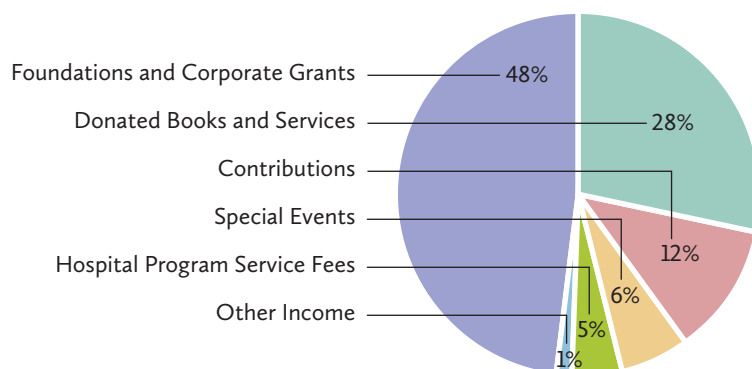
- Books for Babies added two hospital partnerships, making a total of 14 hospitals with our special services on their maternity units. Backus Hospital in Norwich and Charlotte Hungerford in Torrington are the latest partners.
- Books for Babies formally signed on the first six partners with its new Prenatal Project. This important initiative offers new baby books and workshops to pregnant women receiving care at community health centers and primary care clinics.
- Books for Kids was operating 32 Book Places across the state by the end of the fiscal year, up by five from the year before. It also had 12 Partnerships. All 44 of these formal collaborations are with other nonprofits.

For both of our programs, Simon & Schuster gave 53,341 new children's books. We also received 6,818 new books in the Jumping Cow series through a grant from The Elkes Foundation.

Read to Grow received an unqualified, or clean, audit opinion for the 2016–17 fiscal year from our external auditors, Murphy & Company, LLC.

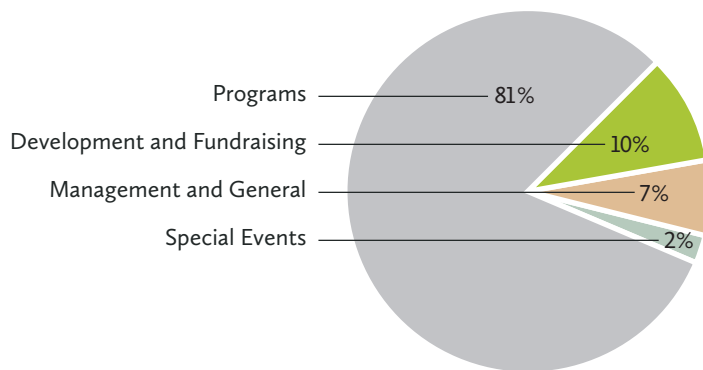
PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUES

Foundations and Corporate Grants	\$ 684,851
Donated Books and Services	404,708
Contributions	168,663
Special Events	85,901
Hospital Program Service Fees	63,750
Other Income	18,069
Total Public Support and Revenues	\$ 1,425,942



FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

Programs	\$ 717,666
Development and Fundraising	86,160
Management and General	59,515
Special Events	19,780
Total Expenses	883,121
Increase in Net Assets	\$ 542,821



Direct program expenses accounted for 81% of total expenses.

Recent Grants That Power Us Forward



SHORELINE ROTARIES

A \$15,000 grant this winter from six shoreline Rotary Clubs enabled Read to Grow to buy more than 8,550 new children's books.

The Rotary Clubs of District 7980, Area 8 are from the towns of Branford, Clinton, East Haven, Guilford, Madison, and North Branford.

After shipment of the new books to Read to Grow, volunteers from the six clubs came to our Branford warehouse to put identifying labels on the books. Many of the books are bilingual Spanish-English for children ranging from newborn to 8 years old.

A CARING AUXILIARY

The Hartford Hospital Auxiliary has been a major supporter of our Books for Babies program for many years. In 2017, their \$30,000 grant paid for one-third of the literacy packets given to the families of over 3,600 babies born at Hartford Hospital.

The Auxiliary was founded in 1921 and has been helping the hospital for nearly 100 years. Its goal is to make a difference in the community by supporting the values of caring, safety, excellence, and integrity at the hospital.

CITIZENS BANK

A \$10,000 grant from Citizens Bank is funding workshops and children's books given by Read to Grow through Connecticut Food Bank's special program for families with children enrolled in Head Start and

other services for young children.

The food bank's Grow Truck serves families in New Haven and Bridgeport, among other cities and towns.

In addition to the grant, Citizens Bank volunteers presented several workshops of their own in both New Haven and Bridgeport, focusing on financial literacy.

PITNEY BOWES FOUNDATION

The Pitney Bowes Foundation has awarded Read to Grow a grant for early childhood literacy work in Bridgeport in 2018.

Foundation funding translates into literacy packets for families of babies born at Bridgeport Hospital and St. Vincent's Medical Center, also in Bridgeport. Additionally, the award will provide children's books for the city's Book Places, which are sites at nonprofits where we deliver free books for families to keep.

Pitney Bowes and the Pitney Bowes Foundation support literacy and education to ensure that all children have the opportunity to succeed in school and are prepared to succeed in their career and life endeavors. Their employees worldwide are committed to their communities and demonstrate their engagement through philanthropy and volunteerism.

UNITED WAY OF COASTAL FAIRFIELD COUNTY

With a \$20,000 grant from United Way of Coastal Fairfield County (UWCFC), Read to



Pictured at the Grow Truck, left to right, are: Kimberly Bartlett-Manisene, Citizens' Assistant Vice President/Regional Public Affairs Manager, Connecticut; Evelyn Tomasello, Co-Coordinator of Books for Kids; Huwerrl Thompson, manager of the Grow Truck; and Ivette Haughton, Assistant Branch Manager for Citizens.

Grow will deliver more than 5,000 new and gently used books to students in the Schools of Hope program to prevent "summer slide" when the academic year ends.

The grant also funds our work with the Child & Family Guidance Center in Bridgeport. That work includes our partnership with their Nurturing Family Network services and a Book Place at their center.

Additionally, the UWCFC funding enables Read to Grow to include information about the new Bridgeport Basics campaign in our literacy packets at the two Bridgeport hospitals.

The Bridgeport Basics are five simple but powerful practices that parents and other care-givers can follow to help prepare their children for pre-school and kindergarten.

A Champion of Read to Grow Honored for Her Work at Saint Francis in Hartford

She's a woman who makes the magic happen—not only for the patients, staff and volunteers at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center but also for hospital friends like Read to Grow.

As longtime Director of Volunteer Services at the hospital in Hartford, Tobye Karl has championed our Books for Babies program, along with other causes and projects with healthy effects reaching well beyond the hospital campus.

For her talent, dedication and achievements, Tobye was honored in December as one of the annual Greater Hartford Health Care Heroes. Nominated by Read to Grow for the prestigious honor, Tobye was the top selection in the Healthcare Staff category and was recognized along with others in a ceremony hosted by *Hartford Business Journal* in Hartford.



Toby Karl (right) and Diane Visconti, our Books for Babies Associate, at the 2017 ceremony for Greater Hartford Health Care Heroes. Mrs. Karl was one of the awardees.

"Toby Karl is 110 percent heart, mind and soul involved in her work," said Kyn Tolson,

Read to Grow's executive director. "We're so grateful for Tobye. She's been key to the great involvement of Books for Babies volunteers at Saint Francis."

Toby facilitated introducing Books for Babies at the hospital in 2003, where about 2,750 babies are born every year. More recently, with her involvement in a Saint Francis Women's Auxiliary children's book drive, almost 10,000 books were collected. Some of that stockpile supplied the Books for Babies volunteers with books they like to hand out to siblings of newborns in the hospital.

"We're making a major impact in turning around the literacy rate in the state of Connecticut," said Tobye.

In her work, she oversees nearly 800 volunteers who help in 89 job responsibilities throughout Saint Francis.



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Four Ways Donations Will Make a Difference

- \$500 = workshop (with new books for babies and handouts) for pregnant women receiving their care at community health centers.
- \$250 = 100 new bilingual books (Spanish-English; Arabic-English) for infants and children.
- \$90 = Free follow-up for 10 families when their babies turn 3 months and 1 year old.
- \$50 = 50 books for 2 childcare providers.

Tax Benefits of Charitable IRA Rollover

A great way to support Read to Grow and receive tax planning benefits is to make a gift directly from your IRA to Read to Grow.

Charitable rollovers count as part of your required minimum distribution, but aren't taxable income to you. This could be a big benefit, particularly if you don't itemize deductions on your individual tax returns. Even if you do itemize, a rollover can save you more on taxes than by taking the IRA distribution in income and then donating it. How it works:

- You must be 70½;
- You can give from between \$100 to \$100,000 in any year;
- If you are married and have a joint IRA, your spouse can also make a gift of up to \$100,000 from your IRA for a total of \$200,000;
- Gifts can be made directly from your IRA to Read to Grow or any public charity;
- Gifts by check must be made out directly to Read to Grow.

To find out more, contact your financial institution and ask about charitable rollover procedures.

BABY STEPS TO LITERACY AT L+M HOSPITAL

(continued from page 1)

(connecting brain) synapses, and that's really important," she said. "Kids who are read to, they hear more, they learn more, and they are better educated when they walk into school. Television doesn't do the same thing."

Hope recalled explaining to one father that it's not about what you read, but the fact that you do it with interest, love and sincerity.

"He said to me, 'I'm reading *Moby Dick* now, and I don't think the baby will understand it.' And I said, 'The baby won't understand Jane and Sally, but what the baby will understand is that you're holding him and hugging him or putting him on your lap, and reading, and he's getting the rhythm of language and vocabulary.'"

If a parent has trouble reading books in English, Hope and the other volunteers encourage reading in any language.

"Read to them in Spanish or Hindi," she said. "The important thing is to hold the baby and read. And, it doesn't have to be mom and dad who read. It could be an older brother or sister. Or grandma!"

Hope, a former teacher, finds her volunteer work rewarding. "I've been asked by parents, 'How long do I have to keep reading? How many months?' And I say, 'I hope you read to your child until your child says—Mom, I can read by myself now.'"