Dear Friends,

I am delighted to share with you Reading is FUNdamental (RIF) Pittsburgh’s Annual Report!

For over three decades, RIF Pittsburgh’s mission has been to provide children with the resources, motivation, and opportunities they need to develop a life-long love of reading. In the past year, we continued to add depth and breadth to our services by impacting the lives of more than 22,000 children and families. We put more than 103,000 books into the hands, hearts, and homes of the children and families who are most in need.

Recently, we were thrilled to hear from one of these “RIF Kids”—our new friend, Damon! I received a voicemail from the tiniest, cutest voice ever, thanking us again and again for the “awesome” RIF book he’d chosen. I called Damon back, only to learn that he was a 1st grader at PPS Manchester, was just learning to use the telephone, and had called us all on his own. Later, I visited him at his school and brought a backpack full of his favorite stories. The happiness in Damon’s eyes when he saw the books was priceless! Damon and his aunt couldn’t wait to add them to his growing collection of RIF books at home. Continuous support from people just like you is helping to make all of this possible.

The literacy gap that exists in the City of Pittsburgh, as evidenced by findings in the 2016 A+ Schools Report, is unacceptable. All children deserve the best chance at success in school and in life, and that’s why we at RIF Pittsburgh are working to ensure that kids, starting in their earliest years, have the resources and opportunities they need to learn to love to read. By providing books, programming, mentoring, and more, we have the opportunity to play a positive role in a child’s life story, and to impact him or her year after year.

I hope you enjoy reading about our accomplishments. If you have any questions, (or, like Damon, just want to talk about books!) please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for joining in our mission to inspire a life-long love of reading in the children and families that we serve.

Warmly,

Florri Ladov
Executive Director
“They give out the most greatest books and make sure I read always.”

“My child loves the program. I am very proud of her excitement!”
In 2015, the NCES’ bi-annual “Reading Report” stated that 31% of all fourth graders in the United States cannot read at even the basic level. The report went on to note that children from economically disadvantaged families consistently perform significantly lower than other children in school, especially in reading.

The situation here in Pittsburgh is no different. According to A+ Schools’ 2016 Report to the Community, a significant literacy gap exists for economically disadvantaged students in Pittsburgh, placing thousands of our city’s children at risk of academic failure. This report shows that nearly 60% of economically disadvantaged children in the Pittsburgh Public Schools’ elementary schools cannot read at grade level.

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) Pittsburgh addresses these critical needs in our community by offering consistent, high-quality, “pushed-in” literacy and educational programming for more than 22,000 economically disadvantaged children in Pittsburgh and the surrounding communities. In the last year alone, we put more than 103,000 self-selected books into the hands of the children and families that need them the most!

Our research-based programs work to bridge the local literacy and achievement gaps and aim to spark a life-long passion for reading and learning in the children that we serve.

Going forward, we will continue to saturate our targeted neighborhoods with as many of our programs as possible, exposing “RIF Kids” to innovative programs from birth through their teenage years.

*Please note, our program figures are for our program year 2015-2016 (school year 2015-16 and summer 2016).

“[RIF] IS SO FULL OF FUN IDEAS, COOL ACTIVITIES, AND I LOVE THE BOOKS THEY GIVE ME. ALSO, THEY MAKE ME PURSUE MY DREAMS. THANK YOU RIF!”

Student at Pittsburgh Linden

Our mission is to provide children with the resources, motivation, and opportunities to develop a life-long love of reading.
WE SERVE....

- More than **22,000 economically disadvantaged children** and families in Pittsburgh and the surrounding communities through our programs and **an additional 7,400 through community events**
- More than **170 sites**
- **Seven targeted neighborhoods:** East Liberty, Hazelwood, Hill District, Homewood, Northside, South Side, and Wilkinsburg

Our core programs:

- Bring **innovative, high-quality literacy experiences** to children and families
- Support students as they **build literacy skills and work to develop a life-long love of reading**
- Provide more than **103,000 books each year** to the children who need them the most

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**NORTHSIDE**
*Books for Keeps, Everybody Wins! and Storymobile programs*
7,465 Children Served  
37 Sites Visited  
18,352 Books Given  
2,927 Books Loaned  
89 Mentors Recruited

**SOUTH SIDE**
*Books for Keeps, Everybody Wins!, and Storymobile programs*
3,653 Children Served  
25 Sites Visited  
9,979 Books Given  
2,506 Books Loaned  
19 Mentors Recruited

**REST OF CITY**
*Books for Keeps program*
7,037 Children Served  
33 Sites Visited  
19,738 Books Given

**OUTSIDE OF CITY**
*Books for Keeps program*
851 Children Served  
3 Sites Visited  
2,811 Books Given

*Program Year 9/15 - 8/16

“My favorite part of RIF is that we get cool books!”
HILL DISTRICT
Books for Keeps, Everybody Wins! and Storymobile programs
2,406 Children Served
22 Sites Visited
5,996 Books Given
3,576 Books Loaned
43 Mentors Recruited

EAST LIBERTY
Books for Keeps and Storymobile programs
2,223 Children Served
22 Sites Visited
4,808 Books Given
1,683 Books Loaned

HOMEWOOD
Books for Keeps, Everybody Wins! and Storymobile programs
2,205 Children Served
11 Sites Visited
5,423 Books Given
2,023 Books Loaned
49 Mentors Recruited

HAZELWOOD
Books for Keeps and Storymobile programs
1,691 Children Served
14 Sites Visited
3,552 Books Given
2,644 Books Loaned

WILKINSBURG
Books for Keeps and Storymobile programs
1,718 Children Served
16 Sites Visited
4,459 Books Given
2,941 Books Loaned

“I believe that the program fosters a love of reading outside of school.”
Our largest program, Books for Keeps, features fun, educational Reading Celebrations that combine story times, motivational literacy activities, and the opportunity to select a book to take home and keep. Designed to engage children in the joy of reading and learning throughout the school year and summer, Reading Celebrations pair story times with engaging activities like games, crafts, and scientific exploration!

By combining literature with cooking, dance, technology, and more, Books for Keeps works to ignite a passion for reading and learning that will follow children throughout their lives. These positive reading experiences are especially critical for children at-risk of educational failure, providing them with the tools they need to succeed in school and beyond.

In the 2015-16 program year, Books for Keeps:

- Provided hands on, interactive Reading Celebrations at 97 sites across the City of Pittsburgh
- Engaged with over 16,000 economically disadvantaged students at schools, early childhood centers, and afterschool programs
- Put over 52,000 new, high-quality books directly into the hands, hearts, and homes of the children who are most in need
- Partnered with the United Way to bring more than 850 books to pre-teens and their mentors through the Be A Middle School Mentor program

“They were exposed to so many different stories and it has really sparked their interest in books.”
Students and teachers agree—they can’t get enough of our Books for Keeps Math and Science Reading Celebrations! Each special session kicks off with an interactive read-aloud story, focused on a STEAM theme. Children then become mini-mathematicians, engineers, and scientists by participating in hands-on experiments, games, explorations, and projects, all based on the book.

After the activity, each child also chooses a brand-new book to take home and keep from a selection of books that explore the world through the lens of math and science. These books often reinforce the skills and topics that were covered in the Celebration, peak a child’s curiosity by exposing them to new material, and empower them to reach their full potential by reading and learning every single day.

In the 2015-16 program year, our Books for Keeps Math and Science Program:

• Gave over 3,100 children the opportunity to explore math, science, engineering, technology, and more through STEAM-centered Reading Celebrations at 27 different sites

• Encouraged curiosity and passion for discovery in children, and helped to plant the first seeds for a life-long love of learning

• Invited special guest scientists from ALCOSAN, Pittsburgh Botanic Garden, and others into classrooms, giving students a first-hand look at careers in STEAM fields

“It helps you learn your words, so when you go to college you know lots of words.”
EVERYBODY WINS!

Everybody Wins! is a lunchtime literacy and mentoring program that strives to build literacy skills and a love of reading in elementary school students. This program pairs first, second, and third graders with corporate and community volunteers to share lunch, conversation, and good books. Students look forward to spending time with their reading buddies each week and benefit from the encouragement of a caring adult, while mentors enjoy sharing a love of books with their students.

One study, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Academy of Sciences, found that Everybody Wins! is one of few programs that effectively impacts low-income students in reading comprehension, motivation, achievement, as well as overall academic performance, classroom behavior, self-confidence, and social skills. The study, conducted in 1998, focused on the Everybody Wins! DC program.

In the 2015-16 program year, Everybody Wins!

- Hosted weekly one-on-one mentoring sessions at four PPS schools: Faison, King, Phillips, and Weil
- Paired nearly 200 first, second, and third grade students with corporate and community volunteers to share lunch, conversation, and books—each and every week
- Loaned over 1,500 books through our “sharing” program, making it possible for students to take books home to read with their families in between mentoring sessions
- Gave participating children 2,000 books to take home and keep over the course of the year, most of which were specifically chosen by the students themselves

“They feel a sense of pride, excitement, and joy to be a part of a community of learners as well as bonding with mentors.”
They feel a sense of pride, excitement, and joy to be a part of a community of learners as well as bonding with mentors. When I’m sad the Storymobile makes me... HAPPY!!!

Our three lending-libraries-on-wheels are a sight to see! They drive up to early childhood centers, schools, afterschool programs, and housing communities on a bi-weekly basis, encouraging children, families, and educators to read, read, read. Each visit features songs; stories; educational games and activities; and the opportunity to choose a book from our diverse, high-interest, culturally-relevant collection. Our sessions focus on kindergarten readiness and reinforce the skills that children learn in their classrooms.

In the evenings, the Storymobile brings books and programming directly into the communities that are most in need. While engaging children through puppets, technology, crafts, and more, we also build strong relationships with parents, grandparents, and community members, increasing the impact of our visits and assuring that the truck is a safe, warm, inviting location within the public housing communities. We strive to develop the Storymobile into a welcome gathering place for all of the children, families, and educators we serve.

In the 2015-16 program year, our Storymobiles:

- Traveled to more than 70 sites, serving over 5,300 children, in our target communities: East Liberty, Hazelwood, Hill District, Homewood, North Side, South Side, and Wilkinsburg
- Helped children self-select nearly 14,000 books to keep during our bi-weekly visits in public housing communities and afterschool programs, as well as during our Reading Celebrations 3-4 times a year
- Loaned nearly 17,000 books to children through our circulating Storymobile collection, and loaned over 3,000 books and resource materials to educators

“When I’m sad the Storymobile makes me... HAPPY!!!”
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Reading Is FUNdamental engages children, families, and educators inside the schools, early childhood centers, and afterschool programs that we serve, but our program has a much wider touch—we are on the ground throughout the year, connecting with people wherever they live, work, and play. We strive to create a broader “culture of literacy” within our community, spreading the fun and importance of childhood literacy wherever we go. In order to deepen our relationships with families right in their own neighborhoods, RIF Pittsburgh brings books, activities, and smiling faces to over 100 events each year. These events not only serve to publicize our many programs, but they allow us to spend time with community members at block parties, holiday lunches, volunteer days, back-to-school celebrations, and more. Of course, events also give us the opportunity to put even more books into the hands of children and families!

Our newest initiative, Storymobile Book Babies, engages the youngest “RIF Kids” and their parents, establishing a love of reading from the earliest age. For the past two years, we have built the Book Babies program into a multi-faceted early literacy service for families living in public housing communities. At special events designed just for them, moms have been able to get “mommy makeovers,” engage with guest speakers from Pittsburgh Brown Mamas, the Office of Child Development, and more; and simply take time for fun and fellowship with other parents. We have also begun to provide morning “Mommy and Me” storytimes, complete with activities, songs, and stories that are perfect for infants and toddlers. These storytimes are an addition to our bi-weekly visits to public housing communities, which give parents time in the evenings to visit the truck with their little ones. There, they can read, talk, sing, and play with their children—all the ingredients necessary for early childhood literacy!

Each and every time they visit the Storymobile, parents and grandparents pick up a bag full of board books and gifts for their babies, and many also choose a book of their own to keep! Parenting books, cookbooks, thrillers, and nonfiction are all favorites that get adults excited about reading. One mom recently reported that she piles her infant, toddler, and school-ager into her bed each night, where they all read their Storymobile books together. In the 2015-16 year, we built relationships with over 150 parents and their little ones. We love the opportunities that this program provides for families to read and learn together, and we can’t wait to watch as our “Book Babies” grow into “RIF Kids” right before our eyes!

Additionally, RIF Pittsburgh continues to work hand-in-hand with schools, afterschool programs, and early childhood centers to provide incentive-based programs for reading. Through our Read to Your Family initiative, as well as Storymobile STARS, students and families receive recognition and prizes for reading outside of school and recording their progress. Educators are also encouraged to become “Reading RockSTARS” as well, keeping track of storytimes inside their sites. Incentives provide new and exciting ways for both children and adults to track their reading while also bolstering confidence and encouraging reading as a daily habit for all ages.

“It gave her confidence and makes her feel great being able to read to her siblings.”
### INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Listing includes individuals and organizations who donated between 6/15-5/16

#### Library Level ($5,000+)
- Nicholas and Cheryl Galizia
- Francis X. Solano Jr., M.D.
- and Lenette Solano
- James Elson and Kathleen Ryan
- Richard and Colleen Earley
- George B. Duffey
- Tom and Lori Dowling
- Christopher Mark
- Mary Denison and Rachel Christian
- Lynne Chadwick
- Connie Cesario
- Jeffrey Emerick
- Lucio and Franke Facchini
- Alan and Rebecca Fager
- Joyce Fako
- Dr. and Mrs. Robert E. Fidoten
- Kathy Fine
- Elizabeth Fleischer
- Fox Chapel Area Education Supports Professionals Association

#### Collection Level ($1,000 - $4,999)
- James and Electra Agras
- Russ and Kathy Ayres
- Cary Blanchett and Denise Dufour
- Alice Buchanan
- Christopher B. Carson and Maria Kast-Carson
- Roy and Susan Dorrance
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- Anonymous (6)
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- ($250 - $999)
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- Marvin L. Bellin
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- Bookstore at Calvary Episcopal Church
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- Lynne Chadwick
- Rachel Christian
- Mary Denison and Christopher Mark
- Tom and Lori Dowling
- George B. Duffey
- Richard and Colleen Earley
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- Jeffrey Emerick
- Lucio and Franke Facchini
- Alan and Rebecca Fager
- Joyce Fako
- Dr. and Mrs. Robert E. Fidoten
- Kathy Fine
- Elizabeth Fleischer
- Fox Chapel Area Education Supports Professionals Association
- Cindy and Joseph Franc
- Nicole Frankhouser
- Jim Gallagher
- Lawrence Gaus
- Melinda Geiger
- Edward Gerjuoy
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- The Leech Family
- Bettsy and Tom Leib
- Claire B. and Lawrence Levine
- H. Kennedy and Hope Linge
- John Lovelace

“They enjoy bringing their books back to school and reading them to the entire class.”
They enjoy bringing their books back to school and reading them to the entire class. They have some of the best books in the world.
“Children need to develop a love for reading. This program definitely supports it.”
I get way more books on my bookshelf and become a better reader by reading the books I get.
Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who donate their time to RIF Pittsburgh each year!

Listing includes individuals who volunteered between 6/15-5/16

Joy Abbott
Aerion Abney
Moses Agaba
Elizabeth Allison
Nancy Baime
Shannon Baker
Sue Balcer
Tricia Baldridge
Christine Balsley
Marcia Bandes
Alicia Barnes
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Liz Salisbury
Paul Scherrer
Cathie Schmidt
Theresa Schrecengost
Andre Scott
Carol Scott
Mary Scott
Bridget Sedlock
They love having a reading buddy and look forward to seeing them each week.

*Everybody Wins! Corporate Partners*
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City of Pittsburgh - Mayor’s Mentoring Initiative
Confluence
Fred Rodgers Company
Innovation Works
Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh
Management Science Associates
Pittsburgh Public Schools
PPG
Reed Smith
SMS Siemag
Tucker Arensburg
They are excited about the stories they hear and LOVE to select their own book.
Be a RIF Pittsburgh Book Hero!

Our programs are supported by foundations, corporations, partners, and individuals who believe that all children should have access to resources and programs designed to foster a life-long love of reading. **YOU** can help a child experience the joy of reading!

- Mail a check to our offices at 10 Children’s Way, Suite 300 Pittsburgh, PA 15212
- Go online to www.rifpittsburgh.org and click on “Donate Now”
- Designate your United Way (#3804) or CFC (#78136) contribution to RIF Pittsburgh
- Volunteer for one of our programs
- Give us a call at 412-321-8022

Thank you for being part of our mission to inspire a life-long love of reading for the children in our community!