Reading Is Bundamental Pittsburgh





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Reading is Fundamental

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

In April 2012, our national partner, Reading Is Fundamental Inc., asked "Book People" across the country to unite in support of children's literacy. Faced with the elimination of its federal allocation and cuts in education funding across the country, RIF asked people to stop and remember the profound role that books can play in a child's life.

This past year, we confirmed that **Pittsburgh is full of "Book People" who are ready to work together to reduce the literacy gap and to help spark a passion for reading in children.** We collaborated with many community stakeholders and organizations; partnered with initiatives such as the United Way's Early Literacy Task Force and the Be 1 in a Million Campaign; recruited almost 150 volunteers to serve as reading buddies; and worked with more than 200 additional volunteers to help serve the children in our community.

The 2011-2012 program year was an exciting one. We worked hard to layer our programming and build a firm, holistic network of literacy services in our targeted communities. We laid the groundwork for the introduction of our second Storymobile team, brought our Everybody Wins! program to capacity, and introduced our Books for Keeps program into fourteen new sites.

While many challenges still lie before us, we are motivated by the positive feedback and stories of success that we continue to receive. From students who have improved their reading skills through Everybody Wins! to the caregivers who tell us that the Storymobile program has transformed their children into readers, we are excited to be cultivating future generations of "Book People."

This report highlights some of these successes, and I hope that you enjoy reading about our efforts to ignite a life-long love of reading in children.

Sincerely, Morri- Ladov

Florri Ladov Executive Director

Mission:

To provide children with the resources, motivation, and opportunities to develop a life-long love of reading

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A 2010 study, conducted by the University of Nevada, confirmed the importance of books in the home. With data drawn from 27 countries, the study demonstrated that parents who have books in their homes increase the level of education their children will attain. In fact, the presence of these books is as important as parental education level in predicting how far students will progress in their own education.

For students whose parents are less-educated, increasing the number of books in their home can have a huge impact. "What kinds of investments should we be making to help these kids get ahead?" asked Mariah Evans, who led the study. "The results of this study indicate that getting some books into their homes is an inexpensive way that we can help these children succeed."

Organizational Overview

You might be shocked to learn that studies have shown that in low-income communities there is only one book available for every 300 children. In fact, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that nearly two-thirds of economically disadvantaged children do not have books in their homes.

In 2007, the NCES' annual "Reading Report," stated that 33 percent 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 study prepared for the Pittsburgh Mayor's Commission on Public Education, a significant literacy gap exists for economically disadvantaged students in Pittsburgh, placing thousands of our city's children at risk of educational failure. This study shows that more than 65% of economically disadvantaged children in Pittsburgh Public Schools cannot read at grade level ("Student Performance in PPS" RAND 2003).

Reading Is FUNdamental (RIF) Pittsburgh addresses these critical needs in our community by providing children with access to self-selected books, creating positive environments that motivate children to develop a life-long love of reading, and engaging families in literacy practices in the home. **Our research-based programs work to bridge the local literacy gap and spark a life-long love of reading in the children that we serve.**

We focus our efforts on the schools, community centers, and after-school programs serving our city's most economically disadvantaged children. For more than 70% of our sites, 75% of the children meet the income requirement for free or reduced lunches, and for 35% of our sites, nearly all of the children qualify.

The core strength of RIF Pittsburgh is that we engage the children of our community throughout their early childhood and elementary school years. **RIF Pittsburgh's impact is much more than a one-time encounter.** RIF Pittsburgh is woven into the fabric of our at-risk children's early educational experience, building the foundations of literacy while fostering a life-long appreciation for reading.

We are focused on ensuring that all four of our programs work in tandem, building upon each other to create a web of services aimed at mitigating the literacy gap. We will continue to saturate targeted neighborhoods with as many of our programs as possible, creating an environment that will enable a child to be exposed to RIF programs from two years of age through 6th grade.

Book People Unite

What do Madeline, Humpty Dumpty, and LeVar Burton all have in common?

They are all "Book People!"

In early 2012, our national partner, Reading Is Fundamental Inc., brought together some of America's favorite singers and beloved book characters to help spread the word about the **transformative power of books**.

Inviting "Book People" to unite, RIF's new Public Service Announcement (PSA) asks viewers to imagine a country in which every child has a book to read. Books can have profound, lasting effects on children's lives, yet nearly two-thirds of low-income American families do not have any books at home for their children.

RIF is working with programs across the country to make this vision into a reality. By getting books into the hands of children who need them the most, RIF is helping to spark a passion for reading and learning that will follow children throughout their lives.

Here in Pittsburgh, we united with some Book People of our own this year! We have teamed up with nationally renowned local children's author, Sharon G. Flake, to be our spokesperson for children's literacy. Born in Philadelphia, Sharon has been a Pittsburgh resident for more than 30 years. She is the author of seven books for children and young adults, and the winner of dozens of recognitions, including the Coretta Scott King Award, the YWCA Racial Justice Award, and the Detroit Public Library Author of the Year.

In her new role, Sharon has been visiting RIF Pittsburgh events and talking to students about reading, writing, and following their dreams. Sharon also hosted a summer time **two-week literacy and entrepreneurship workshop in the Hill District** in collaboration with RIF Pittsburgh, the Hill House Association and Schenley Heights Community Development Program. Asking the 18 middle-school participants to "Read. Write. Dream," Sharon worked closely with the students as they read and discussed her novel, *Money Hungry*, and developed ideas for a business they could implement while still in school.

So, if you're a book person, **be sure to check out RIF's PSA at bookpeopleunite.org** and take the pledge. **Or visit our website**, **rifpittsburgh.org**, **to find out how you can join the movement in your community.** Together, we can work together to close the literacy gap and get books to the children who need them the most.



RIF Pittsburgh had a great time celebrating Dr. Seuss's Birthday and the kickoff of Read Across America with the second graders from Pittsburgh Allegheny! After traveling to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Allegheny branch, students were greeted by the Lorax, Cat in the Hat, Red Fish, and Blue Fish. With a little help from their new friends, the second graders listened to *The Lorax*, fished for red fish and blue fish, and planted their own truffula trees! At the end of the day, each child received a copy of *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut* to take home and keep!



Books for Keeps

"Students often bring their books to lunch, recess, or even back to the library to talk about them or continue reading them. They are very proud of their new books! They often ask when our next **RIF day will** be."

Jennifer Salvatore-Garrett, Pittsburgh Arlington

"My favorite part [of RIF] was getting to choose your own book."

RIF Kid, Pittsburgh Arsenal

"The program helped engage my child in reading."

Parent, Pittsburgh Concord

In the 2011-2012 program year, our oldest and largest program, Books for Keeps, continued to grow, building more home libraries and motivating more children to read than ever before! Each year, this program puts over 64,000 books directly in the hands of more than 20,000 economically disadvantaged children, while helping to create fun, motivational environments that foster a life-long love of reading and learning. By doing so, the Books for Keeps program is working to reduce the literacy gap and build the foundations of academic success.

As part of this program, children at over 130 schools, preschools, community centers, and afterschool programs participate in 3-5 Reading Celebrations each year. Designed to engage children in the joy of reading and learning, Reading Celebrations pair storytimes with fun, motivational activities such as crafts, games, and even science experiments! From egg drop competitions, to word games, to visits from special guests such as authors, musicians, and even Miss Pennsylvania, our outreach coordinators are always developing new, innovative ways to engage the children that we serve. At the end of each Reading Celebration, children get to pick their very own book to take home and keep!

By combining literature with art, music, creative writing, and even dance, RIF Pittsburgh works to ignite a passion for reading and learning that will follow children throughout their education. 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 2011-2012, we expanded the Books for Keeps program into two new elementary schools, three community centers and nine preschools, allowing us to give the gift of reading to an additional 1,900 economically disadvantaged children. We also increased the depth of our impact, aided by an expanded outreach team, who have allowed us to build stronger relationships with our sites, as well as a new book vendor that offers a diverse selection of popular, award-winning and multicultural titles. This increased depth has allowed us to tailor our programming to conduct Reading Celebrations that better meet the needs of the children that we serve.

We continually receive overwhelmingly positive feedback that speaks to our success in motivating the children in our community to develop a life-long love of reading. In 2011-2012, almost 80% of students surveyed said that their Reading Celebrations were "awesome," and most students said that their favorite part of RIF was "picking out a new book." Our book selection was rated highly by students, teachers, and parents, and the vast majority of the students reported reading their books at home. As one coordinator said, "Owning a book empowers children by allowing them to start their own book collection and encourages them to engage in literacy at home, as well as at school."

Math and Science

In its third year, our Books for Keeps "Math and Science" program continues to engage children in hands-on math and science Reading Celebrations designed to encourage curiosity and a passion for discovery, and help to plant the first seeds for a life-long love of learning.

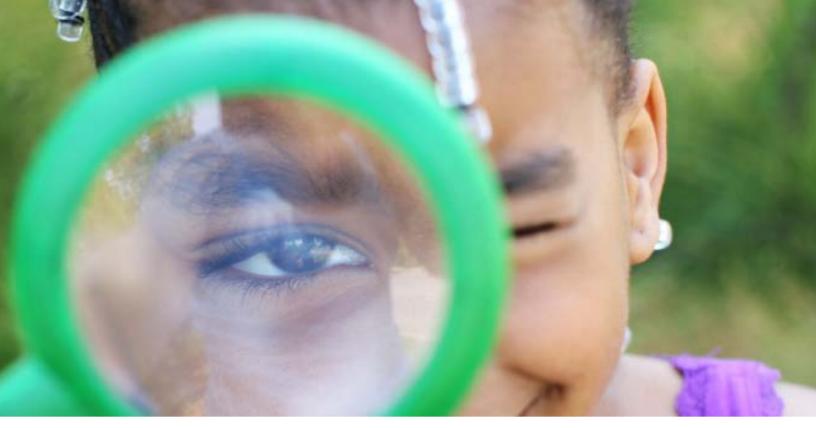
This year, with continued support from PNC Foundation's Grow Up Great Initiative, the Bayer USA Foundation, the PPG Industries Foundation, the Dominion Foundation, and Westinghouse Nuclear, we were able to expanded the program to serve 22 elementary schools and preschools, touching nearly 1,900 children! Each of these schools enthusiastically welcomed the program - along with some "real scientists"-into their classrooms!

Every RIF Math and Science Reading Celebration features a special read-aloud story that explores a math or science theme such as the environment, energy, health, nature, color, light, and more. After the story, children participate in hands-on math and science activities related to the theme of the story. Children make predictions and hypotheses (Which type of soil holds the most water?), practice counting and estimation (How many seeds can I fit into a jar this size?), and observe science in action (What happens when I heat up the air inside of this balloon?). This approach of combining storytelling with hands-on experimentation will help children create real connections between what they experience through reading and what exists in the world around them. At the end of the Reading Celebration, every child chooses a brand-new book to take home from a selection of books that includes math and science-themed titles.

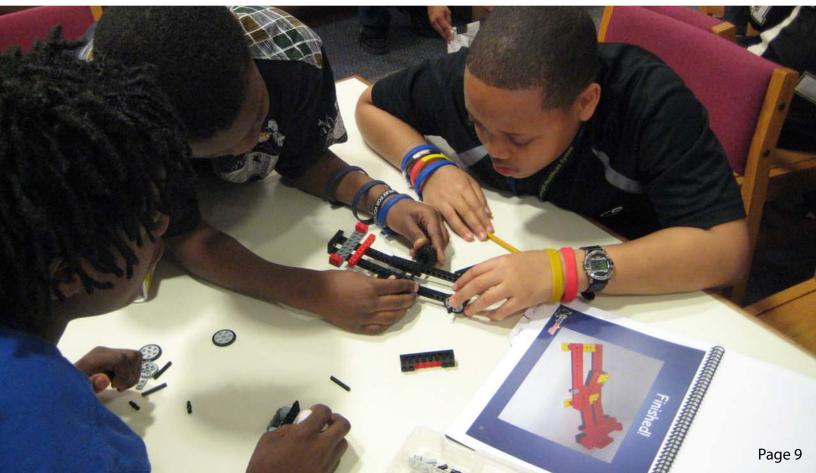
We have held some truly spectacular Reading Celebrations this year. Students at Brightside Academy learned about what happens in their "Silly Stomachs" when they eat and drink, while fourth graders at Johnston Elementary had a scientist from PPG Industries visit to teach them about photochromism.

We have also teamed up with Snapology, a local organization that allows students to use Lego bricks to build machines, robots, and other structures while exploring the worlds of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and literacy. The program provides a fun, team-based environment where kids have a blast and also develop problem solving, critical thinking, and social skills. In one of our favorite Snapology Reading Celebrations, fourth, fifth, and sixth graders built catapults after learning about the history and mechanics of the device. They then tested their creations by laying siege to a castle with cotton balls! We are continually exploring fun, innovative opportunities like this in order to engage the economically disadvantaged children that we serve in meaningful ways.

This program helps to increase the quality and depth of our services and has been particularly effective in engaging reluctant and older readers in literacy activities. The hands-on math activities and science experiments expose the children to more "challenging" subject matter in a way that they embrace and enjoy, and it allows them to **get their hands dirty and have a lot of fun!**



Introducing children at an early age to educational environments that incorporate reading, math, and science contributes significantly to future educational success. In the article, "Reading and Writing in the Science Classroom," Dr. Patricia Bowers explains that combining reading with math and science instruction allows children to create real connections between concepts experienced through books and the basic math and science skills learned through hands-on experimentation: "We can inspire an interest in science at an early age by reading aloud high-quality science books, helping build science literacy and encouraging the next generation of scientists and engineers... Science read-alouds... can increase science vocabulary, lessen the abstract nature of science principles, and enrich students' overall science experiences" (Salley and Young 2004).





In the beginning of February, a third grade teacher at Pittsburgh King, invited our Everybody Wins! coordinator into her classroom to discuss the impact that the program was having on her students. The teacher noted a large chart on the wall, which kept track of the number of words per minute that each child in the class could read. What our coordinator saw was amazing. **One child for example, was only reading at the rate 13 words per minute in September.** However, by January she was reading 60 words per minute and in February her speed had increased to 70 words per minute! The teacher thanked us for including her students in the Everybody Wins! program, stating that it had increased their interest in reading, motivated them to read at home and, in turn, helped to significantly improve their reading scores.



Everybody Wins!

Two years ago, RIF Pittsburgh was proud to become the Pittsburgh affiliate of Everybody Wins! USA, a national literacy and mentoring program that strives to build literacy skills and a love of reading among elementary school students. We are happy to report that our second year of running the program went very smoothly, and we were successful in achieving full capacity, allowing us to accommodate as many students as possible within the three schools that we serve. Each week we watched students and mentors enter the library with smiles on their faces, and we heard encouraging reports of the program's positive impact!

Everybody Wins! is a lunchtime literacy and mentoring program that pairs first, second, and third graders with volunteers from local companies and the community to share lunch, conversation, and good books. In the 2011-2012 school year, the Everybody Wins! program served 165 first, second, and third grade students at Pittsburgh King, Pittsburgh Weil, and Pittsburgh Phillips. We ended the year with having 147 students paired with 139 mentors from 40 local companies and organizations. Together, they have shared over 3,800 books!

Formal evaluations of Everybody Wins! have shown the program to be one of the very few programs to effectively impact low-income students in reading comprehension, motivation and achievement, as well as overall academic performance, classroom behavior, self-confidence, and social skills. The feedback that we have received from our students, parents, teachers, and mentors supports these gains, and demonstrates our success in impacting the students that we served.

In our end of the year surveys, **students reported an increase in their reading motivation** (79% of students said that they liked reading more as a result of their participation in the Everybody Wins! program) **and in their reading skills** (70% of students felt that reading became easier for them over the course of the program). Additionally, 85% of **our mentors reported seeing an increase in students' confidence in reading**, while 72% reported **seeing a noticeable improvement in students' reading skills**.

Parents also reported the programs positive impact on their children beyond the classroom. One parent of a third grade student at Pittsburgh King noted that his daughter was "a lot more interested in reading" and that she now "often asks what words mean."

Additionally, surveyed teachers reported that the Everybody Wins! program supports their work in the classroom by increasing reading motivation, promoting oral reading fluency, and emphasizing vocabulary. A second grade teacher from Pittsburgh Weil stated that Everybody Wins! encourages **"lower level/reluctant readers to become more consistent avid readers!"** He continued on, noting that "Enjoying books is a key factor in how much time children spend reading. **EW! has been an integral part in creating relationships that foster positive reading attitudes."**

This year, RIF Pittsburgh was thrilled to be a part of the **United Way's Be 1 in a Million Campaign**, the nation's largest volunteer initiative to recruit readers, tutors, and mentors for children. By increasing access to books, celebrating reading in a positive environment, and engaging community volunteers, parents, and families, **Everybody Wins! works to bridge the literacy gap one mentor, one child, one book at a time.**

Storymobile

"The Storymobile provides a special place other than the classroom to enjoy reading; it makes books special!"

Teacher, Manchester Academic Charter School

"The children love the Storymobile. You can hear them humming and singing the songs they've learned throughout the week."

Teacher, Robin's Nest

"It allows for more language and literacy opportunities in order to prepare them for kindergarten."

Teacher, Rochelle Childcare

We are very pleased to report that we have made significant progress over the past year in developing the Storymobile into a thriving community asset! Building off of our first year's research and lessons learned, we set out to reshape and rebuild the Storymobile program. This was a year of innovation, development, and team building that has led to our current model of service, which has been received with enthusiasm and excitement by our sites.

The Storymobile offers RIF Pittsburgh a unique opportunity to engage low-income families and children in their own neighborhoods. In bi-weekly visits, this lending library-on-wheels travels to childcare homes and centers, and public housing communities to engage parents, caregivers, and children on the importance of literacy. These frequent visits allow us to build strong relationships within these communities, tailor programming to their unique needs, and hopefully develop the Storymobile into a gathering place for positive, multi-generational interaction. The Storymobile also engages parents, caregivers, and other family members with events and activities designed to emphasize the importance of literacy in their own lives, as well as their children's.

We focused on integrating the Storymobile within our existing programming, and chose to serve neighborhoods with the greatest need where the children are also participating in other RIF Pittsburgh programs through their schools or afterschool centers. The neighborhoods we selected are East Liberty, the Hill District, Homewood, North Side, South Side, and Wilkinsburg.

To reshape the program, we hired two Co-Directors with a unique mix of backgrounds and talents to lead our efforts. Both individuals have strong backgrounds in early childhood education and early literacy. Our first Co-Director joined the team in November 2011 and helped us to begin the process of saturating our target neighborhoods with Storymobile programming.

We rolled out our initial new schedule and programming in January 2012, serving 33 daycares, preschools, and afterschool programs, and seven public housing communities. This schedule allowed us to impact children in both their learning and home environments, as well as to provide modeling and development opportunities for site staff and family members. From January through May, the Storymobile reached over 1,100 children, interacted with over 130 service providers, and loaned more than 4,000 books.

With this new model firmly in place, we began to lay the groundwork for the introduction of our second Storymobile. We brought on our second Co-Director, began to further develop our programming, and identified new sites to serve in our upcoming program year. We also began working closely with an advisory committee of CLP children's librarians to conduct a complete review of our library inventory to ensure that we have a comprehensive, high quality selection of current, high interest, age-appropriate, and multicultural books!



The excitement and cooperation that we have seen from our sites has been fantastic! Throughout Pittsburgh, we have started to see a lot of familiar faces. Our Storymobile children spot our team members all across the city, at their schools, in their afterschool programs, around their neighborhoods and, sometimes, even at IHOP on Sunday mornings! When they meet our team members, all that these excited children want to know is "where is the Storymobile?" so that they can borrow more books!



Read to Your Family



The Read to Your Family program is a vehicle to integrate reading into everyday life and is focused on developing families of readers. Designed to engage parents and caregivers in their children's reading development, this program gives families the opportunity to share the excitement of reading a book together, strengthening the learning experience in the home.

Research indicates that parent and family involvement are crucial for developing literacy. The combination of access to books and a positive family environment that encourages good reading habits can make a huge impact on motivating children to read. According to a study conducted by the College Board, reading is more dependent on learning activities in the home than is math or science (1994). Reading aloud to children is critical to preparing them for reading on their own. However, less than half of families read to their kindergarten-age children on a daily basis (NCES 2000).

The Read to Your Family program motivates students to read outside of the classroom by working with teachers and administrators to provide a system of incentives for students and their families each time that they read a book together at home. From gold stars posted on the classroom wall to opportunities to win a "RIF-fle" with educational games and prizes, this program emphasizes the importance of good literacy, while adding another layer of reading motivation for children.

In the 2011-2012 program year, the Read to Your Family program **expanded into four new schools**. Participating students and families **shared over 12,500 stories together!**



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Page 18

Site List

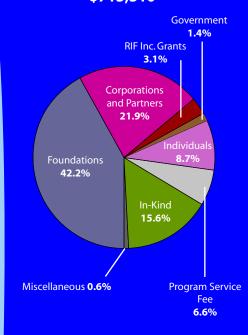
Aunt Terry's Daycare **Bedford Hill Community** Bethany House Academy **Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace** Centers (6 sites) Boys and Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania (3 sites) Brightside Academy (8 sites) Center for Family Excellence **Chartiers ECC** Child Watch of Pittsburgh Children's Museum Head Start **Citizens to Abolish Domestic** Apartheid (CADAprograms) Conroy ECC **Cornell School District** COTRAIC Crescent ECC **Dotties Child Care Duquesne City Elementary** Family Life Empowerment Center For Kids Only Child Care Center **Forbes Family Practice** Gwen's Girls **Healthy Start House Hill House Association** Hilltop CCC Homeville Elementary Homewood Family Support Hosanna House CDC (2 sites) Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (5 sites) Hug Me Tight Childlife Center Human Services Center Corporation John Heinz House Johnston Elementary **Kelly Elementary** Kelly's Kingdom Lots of Tots Manchester Academic **Charter School** Manchester Youth & **Development Center** Matilda Theiss Monumental Baptist Church Mooncrest Knowledge Connection Mt. Ararat Early CDC **Oak Hill Community Oakland Sunshine** Peabody ECC Pittsburgh Allegheny K-8 Pittsburgh Arlington PreK-5 Pittsburgh Arsenal PreK-8 Pittsburgh Banksville PreK-5 Pittsburgh Beechwood PreK-5

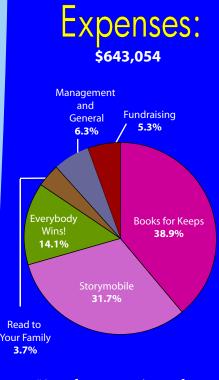
Pittsburgh Brookline PreK-8 Pittsburgh Classical ECC and 6-8 Pittsburgh Concord K-5 Pittsburgh Faison K-8 Pittsburgh Fort Pitt PreK-5 Pittsburgh Fulton PreK-5 Pittsburgh Grandview K-5 Pittsburgh King PreK-8 Pittsburgh Liberty K-5 Pittsburgh Lincoln PreK-8 Pittsburgh Manchester PreK-8 Pittsburgh Miller PreK-8 Pittsburgh Morrow K-5 Pittsburgh Murray PreK-8 Pittsburgh Northview PreK-8 Pittsburgh Phillips K-5 Pittsburgh Roosevelt PreK-5 Pittsburgh Schaeffer K-8 Pittsburgh Schiller 6-8 Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy PreK Pittsburgh South Brook 6-8 Pittsburgh South Hills 6-8 Pittsburgh Spring Hill K-5 Pittsburgh Sterrett 6-8 Pittsburgh Stevens K-8 Pittsburgh Sunnyside K-8 Pittsburgh University Prep PreK Pittsburgh Weil PreK-5 Pittsburgh Westwood K-8 Pittsburgh Whittier K-5 Pittsburgh Woolslair K-5 **Providence Family Support Center** Roberta's Child Care II **Robin's Nest** Rodman Childcare Center **Rosedale Child Care Services** Schenley Heights CDC Sister Thea Bowman Spring Garden ECC The Center that C.A.R.E.S. The Early Learning Institute (2 sites) The Pittsburgh Project TLC **Training Wheels Nursery School Turner Elementary School UPMC New Kensington** Family Health Center Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Charter School Urban Pathways Charter School Wilkinsburg Family Support Center Women's Center & Shelter YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh (4 sites) YMWAHA YWCA

Fiscal Year ending May 31, 2012

Revenues: \$853,310

Adjusted Revenue: \$713,310*





*Less future portions of multiple year grants

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