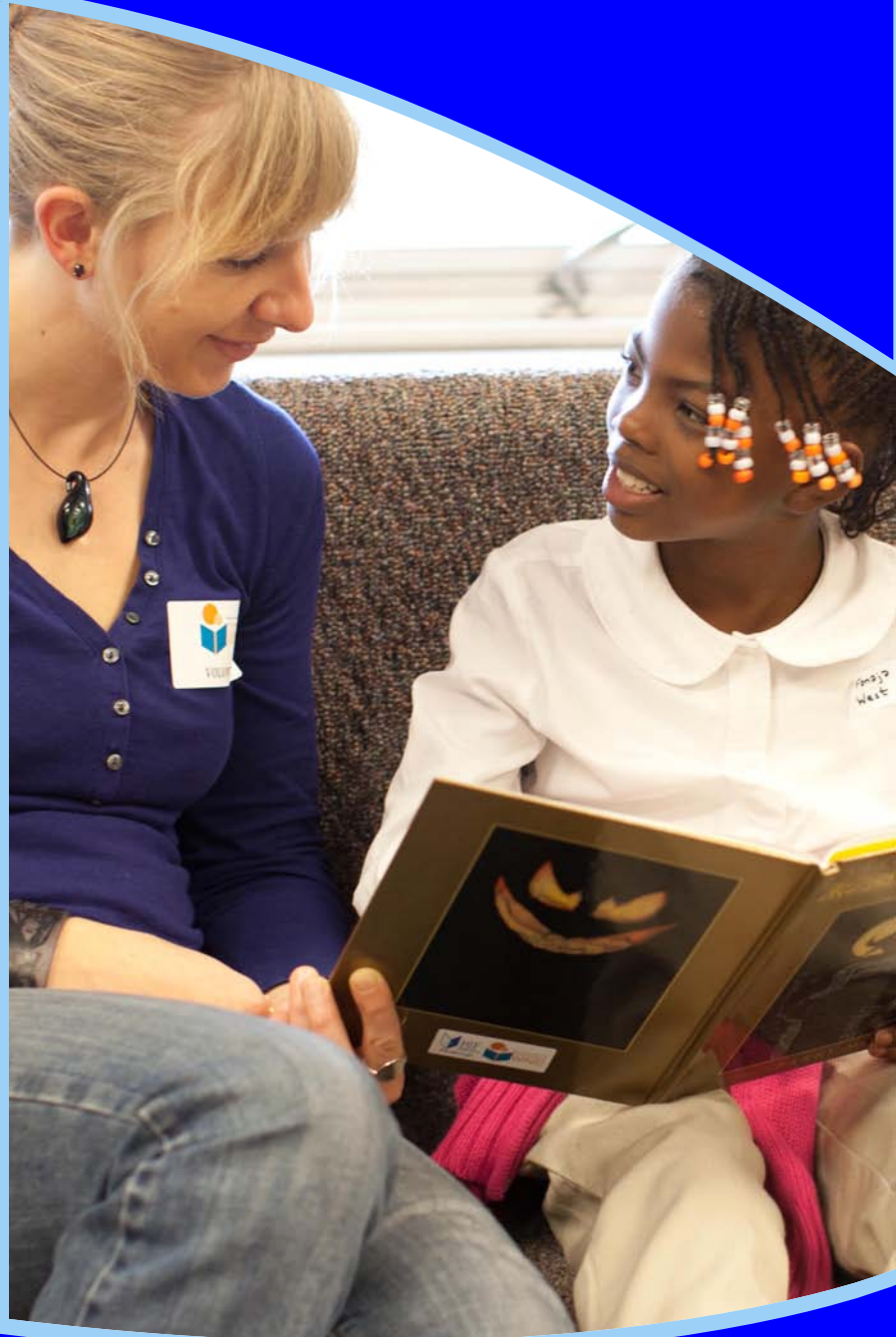


Annual Report 2012-2013



Reading Is
Fundamental
Pittsburgh



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mission:

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

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Dear Friends,

In Mo Willems' *Today I Will Fly*, which always gets classrooms of children giggling, the main character, Piggie, has a very ambitious goal: Piggie proudly announces that she will do the impossible and take to the skies by the day's end. She knows that flying is a daunting task, particularly for a pig, but she enlists a few friends to help her along the way.

Like our friend Piggie, we have a lofty goal here at RIF Pittsburgh. We are working to reduce the literacy gap and inspire a life-long love of reading in the economically disadvantaged children in our community. And, like Piggie, we have made significant strides this past year. With the help of our partners, volunteers, and donors, we have expanded our programming, deepened our impact, and sparked a passion for reading in children across our city.

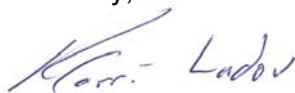
In 2012-2013, we launched our second Storymobile into service, brought the Everybody Wins! program to a new school, and continued to grow and deepen our presence in our six targeted communities. We saw record numbers of children and families in the eight public housing communities that we served this summer, where many were skeptical about our ability to make real, meaningful impact. We worked to fully leverage our programming, to fortify strategic partnerships, and to build a firm, holistic network of literacy services in our community. I am thrilled with the progress that we have made.

Every day we see the evidence of our impact. From children who read their new books at recess, to students who make birthday cards for their mentors, to families who never fail to come onto the Storymobile, even in the snow!

Of course, we could never have come this far, or flown this high, without the support of our partners, volunteers, donors, and the community. Thank you for believing in our mission and supporting our efforts to close the literacy gap.

I hope that you enjoy looking through our Annual Report, which summarizes our program activities over the past year. I look forward to the new heights that we hope to achieve in the upcoming year.

Warmly,



Florri Ladov
Executive Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent 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 (NCES) reports that nearly two-thirds of economically disadvantaged children do not have any books in their homes.

In 2013, the NCES' annual *Reading Report* stated that 32% of all fourth graders in the United States could not read at even the basic level. The report went on to note that children from economically disadvantaged families perform significantly lower than other children in school, especially in reading.

The situation here in Pittsburgh is no different. According to A+ Schools' 2012 annual *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 more than 50% 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 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 for 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.**

Today, all of our programs are thriving, and **RIF Pittsburgh is now armed with an arsenal of services that allows us to more effectively tackle the literacy challenges that our community faces.** Our goal is to ensure that all four of our programs are fully integrated, building upon each other to create a web of services aimed at mitigating the literacy gap. We are continuing 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 their teens.

NORTH SIDE

Books for Keeps, Read to Your Family, Everybody Wins! and Storymobile programs

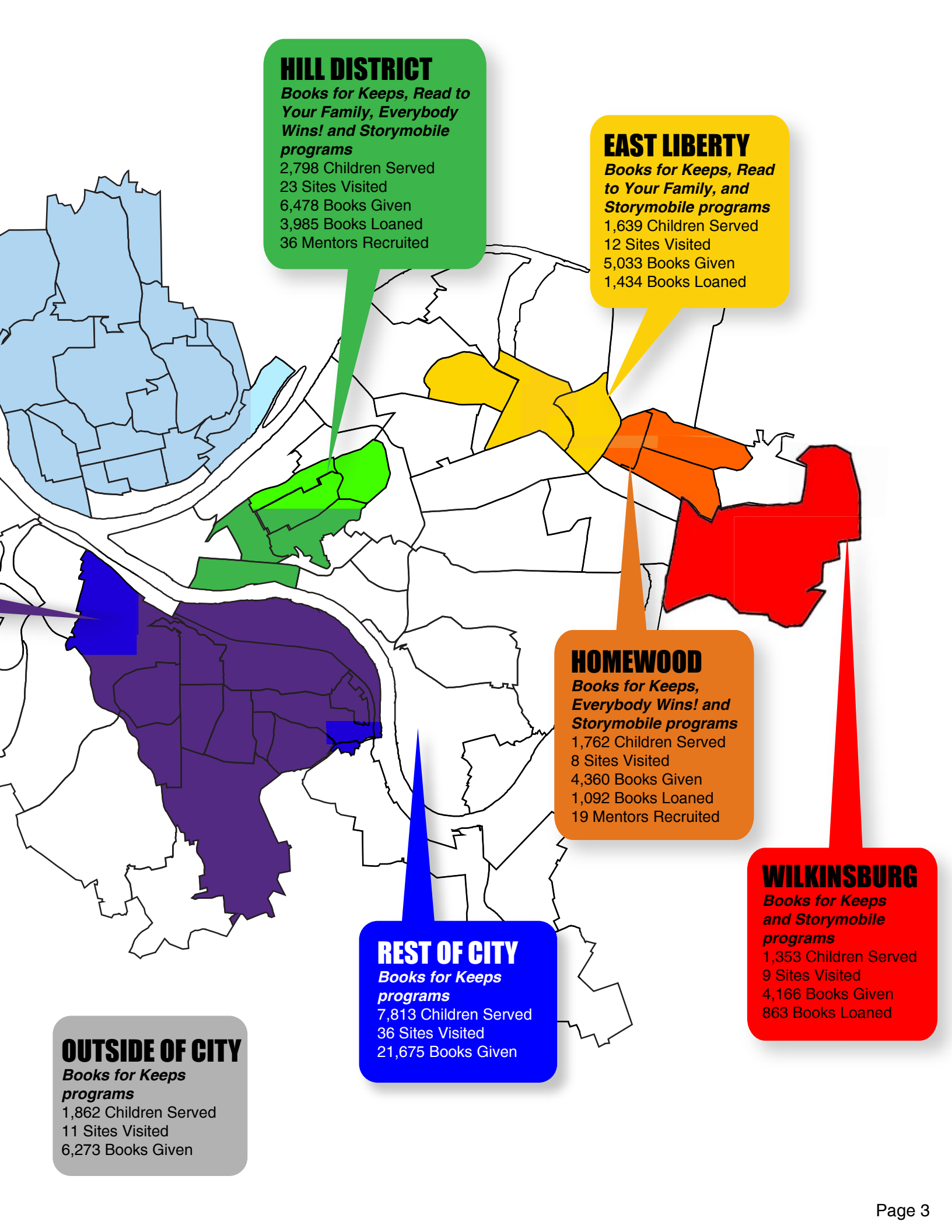
6,340 Children Served
28 Sites Visited
15,321 Books Given
2,556 Books Loaned
97 Mentors Recruited

SOUTH SIDE

Books for Keeps, Read to Your Family, Everybody Wins! and Storymobile programs

3,079 Children Served
16 Sites Visited
8,578 Books Given
1,739 Books Loaned
29 Mentors Recruited

The Storymobile leads the efforts of our other programs, and has become the cornerstone of our organizational strategy. **Our target Storymobile neighborhoods** (East Liberty, Homewood, Hill District, North Side, South Side, and Wilkinsburg) **have become the focus areas for our entire organization**, and we are working to introduce Books for Keeps, Read to Your Family, and Everybody Wins! into as many appropriate sites in these communities as possible. The Storymobile is a highly visible sign of our work in these communities, and the layering of multiple RIF Pittsburgh programs gives "hands and feet" to our efforts. This layering allows us to provide the children with a comprehensive, holistic literacy experience, touching them over and over and over, beginning at two years of age and beyond!



HILL DISTRICT

Books for Keeps, Read to Your Family, Everybody Wins! and Storymobile programs

2,798 Children Served
 23 Sites Visited
 6,478 Books Given
 3,985 Books Loaned
 36 Mentors Recruited

EAST LIBERTY

Books for Keeps, Read to Your Family, and Storymobile programs

1,639 Children Served
 12 Sites Visited
 5,033 Books Given
 1,434 Books Loaned

HOMEWOOD

Books for Keeps, Everybody Wins! and Storymobile programs

1,762 Children Served
 8 Sites Visited
 4,360 Books Given
 1,092 Books Loaned
 19 Mentors Recruited

WILKINSBURG

Books for Keeps and Storymobile programs

1,353 Children Served
 9 Sites Visited
 4,166 Books Given
 863 Books Loaned

REST OF CITY

Books for Keeps programs

7,813 Children Served
 36 Sites Visited
 21,675 Books Given

OUTSIDE OF CITY

Books for Keeps programs

1,862 Children Served
 11 Sites Visited
 6,273 Books Given

BOOKS FOR KEEPS

In the 2012-2013 program year, our largest program, Books for Keeps, continued to foster a life-long love of reading in the children in our community.

Each year, this program puts over 64,000 self-selected books directly in the hands of more than 20,000 economically disadvantaged children in our community.

As part of this program, children at over 140 schools, preschools, community centers, and afterschool programs participated in 3-5 Reading Celebrations throughout the course of the 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! Often, we tailor these celebrations to complement and supplement the subjects that students are covering in their classrooms, allowing us to extend their learning through fun, meaningful activities. At the end of each Reading Celebration, children get to pick their very own book to take home and keep, from a selection that includes award-winning, nonfiction, and multicultural titles!

Last year, we hosted some truly spectacular Reading Celebrations! We brought local author Sydelle Pearl to Pittsburgh King to talk with fourth graders about her career as an author, planted seeds with preschoolers at Pittsburgh Conroy, and introduced students at several sites to the fun of the Mattress Factory! We even brought a real live dragon to classrooms across our city.

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, helping to provide them with the tools they need to succeed in school, and beyond.

In an effort to layer our programming, we have also brought the Books for Keeps program to our Storymobile sites! Four times each year, instead of choosing a book to borrow until the next visit, students select their own book to keep! In March, preschool children got *Wild about Books* during their celebration, while older children read a selection from *The Name of This Book is Secret* by Pseudonymous Bosch and participated in some scientific “magic” tricks. Children love their extra special Storymobile visit, and teachers have indicated that the Reading Celebrations also help children to build literacy and social-behavioral skills, while having fun!

Additionally, **our Books for Keeps “Math and Science” program continues to be overwhelmingly popular! As part of this program, over 2,300 children participated in fun and interactive Math and Science Reading Celebrations throughout the year.** These celebrations featured a special read-aloud story that explored a math or science theme, and we covered topics ranging from the environment to health to nature, and more! We even brought in some of our community partners, like ALCOSAN, RiverQuest, and Snapology, to make these celebrations even more special and to introduce children to careers in STEM fields. As children hypothesized, estimated, observed, predicted, and measured, they formed meaningful connections between what they experienced through the story and what they experienced in the world around them. Our take-home book selections for these Reading Celebrations also include a selection of math and science titles.

All of the teachers who responded to our surveys indicated that the Books for Keeps



program is having a positive impact on the children in their classrooms. A classroom assistant at Pittsburgh Concord said, “Any child will love a book to call his/her own. Especially when they get a choice.” The vast majority of teachers surveyed indicated that they were confident that the children read their books at home and many noted that students discussed their new books during class time. Teachers that responded also gave high ratings to the selection of books available and found our outreach activities to be highly motivating for students. Another Concord teacher commented, “The children LOVE to have stories read to them - it helps promote literacy, comprehension and re-telling skills.”

Teachers that responded saw the Books for Keeps program as a rewarding experience for their students. Many noted that while there are some students who have been exposed to books or reading with a family member, a lot of the children lived in homes where they did not own any books. The program allowed children to have a sense of ownership through the books they received and were able to keep. As the librarian at Pittsburgh Liberty said, “Students were very excited about getting a ‘forever’ book they could keep and not worry about returning to the library.

[If not for RIF Pittsburgh], some students would never get to own their own.”

The children that we served also said that they loved the Books for Keeps program! When asked about their favorite part, we received a variety of responses ranging from “[when they] read us a story,” to “[when they] let us have our own book,” to “they were all my favorite,” to “the dragon we had in our class,” in reference to a visiting reptile and animal-themed activity. The children also indicated that, over the course of the year, they read most or all of their RIF books at home.

Finally, the parents that responded to our surveys also found the Books for Keeps program to be highly impactful for students, reporting that their children were excited to bring new books home and that their children read most or all of their new books. Additionally, the majority of parents also reported reading Books for Keeps books at home with their children. A parent whose children attend the Urban League of Pittsburgh Charter School said, “I do not always have money for books for my children. In fact, 90% of the books they have were given through these types of programs.”

EVERYBODY WINS!

It's official. Our third year of operating the Everybody Wins! program was our most successful yet!

During the 2012-2013 school year, **this lunchtime literacy and mentoring program paired 187 first, second, and third graders with 181 volunteer reading mentors to share lunch, conversation, and good books each week.** We expanded the program into a new school, Pittsburgh Faison, and added a reading day at one of our existing schools, Pittsburgh Weil.

Over the course of the year, we watched relationships grow, smiles cross participants' faces, and students discover the joy of getting lost in a really good book. In fact, the pairs at Pittsburgh Faison, Pittsburgh King, Pittsburgh Phillips, and Pittsburgh Weil read more than 4,350 stories together!

We continue to be amazed by the strength of these relationships and how quickly students and mentors grow to trust each other. Students are continually asking their teachers, "Is Everybody Wins! today?" and it is seen as a special privilege to be able to participate in the program.

One of our favorite projects last year was the creation of our Everybody Wins! Storybox. With support from the United Way of Allegheny County, we commissioned the Saturday Light Brigade to interview a select number students and mentors to reflect on the memories they made through the year. One pair we talked to, Juli Milan and Nya, who read at Pittsburgh Phillips, first met in mid-October. When we talked to them in March, they had already grown very close:

I'm Juli Milan, I'm 53, and I'm a stay-at-home mom.

My name is Nya, I'm 7 years old, and I live in Pittsburgh. We're Reading Buddies at Pittsburgh Phillips.

Juli: Nya, what do you like best about the program?

Nya: That I get to read with you a lot, and that I have a friend to talk to....What do you like best about the program?

Juli: I think the best thing about the program is meeting you guys. I came thinking that I was going to read books, which I enjoy doing, and instead, I get see you every week and hear you read.

Nya: I like having friends in school that I can talk to and spend time with, but I don't typically read with them. You're like a best friend to me.

In addition to testimonies like Juli and Nya's, mentors, teachers, and parents also let us know that the program is making meaningful impact on students' reading skills!

In our year-end surveys, 49% of mentors that responded reported seeing their students increase their confidence in reading, 58% saw noticeable improvement in their students' reading skills, and 21% observed their students demonstrating interest in more advanced books over the course of the year. As one mentor at Pittsburgh King noted, "I was very happy with how [my Reading Buddy] improved over the year—at the beginning of the year, he did not want to read anything aloud...By the end of the year, he read entire books to me."

The students who responded reported an increase in their reading motivation, in their reading skills, and in their reading at home.

Parents confirmed that the program impacted their children beyond the classroom, increasing students' interest in books and enthusiasm for reading. One parent of a third grade student at Pittsburgh Faison said, "[My daughter] really showed a 100% improvement in her reading skills," while another Faison parent said, "She has brought up her reading grade which was a big goal for us...she has come a long way."

Finally, all of the teachers who completed our survey indicated that Everybody Wins! supports their work in the classroom by increasing reading motivation, promoting oral reading fluency, and emphasizing vocabulary. Mr. Saphr, a teacher at Pittsburgh Faison, said that he "loved the excitement and sense of ownership this gave the students; 'My book! My mentor!' Something good was happening in their lives. The mentors were wonderful."

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.



STORYMOBILE

The Storymobile program 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 early childhood centers, PreK and kindergarten classrooms, afterschool programs, and public housing communities to engage children, families, and educators with motivational and skill building literacy programming.

RIF Pittsburgh took over the Storymobile program in 2010, and we are happy to report that in the last year, **the program served more than 3,250 children and families and loaned them nearly 12,000 books! We also gave an additional 2,400 books to children and families at 40 community events and festivals throughout the city.**

After a comprehensive initial evaluation, we set out to reshape and rebuild the program, with the goal of transforming the Storymobile into a valued, and thriving, community asset. The first two years of operation were filled with innovation, program development, and team building, leading to our current model of service and **the launch of our second Storymobile in September 2012.**

In the 2012-2013 program year, the Storymobile visited 54 sites in our community, including 27 childcare centers, 6 schools, 13 afterschool programs, and 8 public housing communities. We also provided professional development training and modeled best literacy practices for almost 300 educators.

We spent the last year developing new, engaging programming designed to build literacy skills and get children excited about reading and learning. This programming is cumulative, building upon itself with each visit, while also supporting educators' work in their classrooms and childcare centers. Using

stories, songs, games, and technology, the Storymobile staff supports children as they develop language, literacy, and social-behavioral skills. We have built strong, engaging programming that is developmentally appropriate, takes into account the latest trends in educational research, and supports broader academic goals, including kindergarten readiness.

For example, during our "Animals" theme this summer, the children listened to "Sleep Big Bear Sleep," a story about a bear that refused to hibernate. Afterwards, our Storymobile team used our iPads to play audio clips of various animals that hibernate. The kids also had to guess which animal made the sound from pictures displayed on a felt board. This activity helped the children to develop their vocabulary by introducing them to new words and animals.

For older children, this lesson included some science activities to help build their content knowledge and develop comprehension skills. When we discussed hibernating animals, we explored how blubber would keep animals warm in the winter time. We filled a bag with Crisco and had the children wrap their hands in another bag. They placed their hand in the Crisco bag and then quickly dunked it into ice water. The children were surprised when they discovered that they could not feel the ice water because the Crisco, acting as blubber, kept their hand warm.

With support from The Buhl Foundation, we purchased an entirely new collection for our vehicles. We collaborated with an advisory committee of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh children's librarians to conduct a complete review of our lending library inventory. We worked to ensure that we had a



comprehensive, high-quality selection of current, high interest, age-appropriate, award-winning, and multicultural books available for children to borrow! We also expanded our collection of teacher resources, offering professional development materials and “theme bags,” which are collections of books, activity ideas, and educational materials surrounding specific themes.

We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback about our successes so far!

In our year-end surveys, all of the educators that responded indicated that the Storymobile program is having a positive impact on the children in their classrooms. As one staff member at the Hamilton/Larimer Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace afterschool program said, “I believe the Storymobile is the most crucial part of our program. So many of our children are so far behind

in reading and the Storymobile really helps with that. Choosing their own books makes them feel special. And the stories and activities help to build their skills.” The vast majority of educators indicated that the children read their borrowed books frequently, and the selection of books available in our collection was rated very highly.

We also surveyed the children that we serve to gauge their perceptions of the program. The children that responded said that they loved the Storymobile program, and when asked about their favorite part, we received a variety of responses ranging from “bringing books home,” to “they read books to me,” to “having fun,” to “playing games with my friends and teachers.” The children also indicated that, over the course of the year, they read most or all of their borrowed books, increased the amount they read on their own, and saw improvement in their reading skills.

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 while encouraging children to become proficient readers, this program gives families the opportunity to share the excitement of reading a book together, helping to strengthen 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 have 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-file" with educational games and prizes, this program

emphasizes the importance of strong literacy, while adding another layer of reading motivation for children.

In the 2012-2013 program year, **Read to Your Family students and families shared over 6,300 stories together!**

Last summer, **we also piloted a new model for the Read to Your Family program**, which was very successful! We teamed up with three Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace afterschool programs in the housing communities of Bedford Dwellings, Northview Heights, and Oak Hill and launched **Storymobile STARS** to boost family engagement and combat summer learning loss. This incentive-based program challenged children to read 10-15 books over the summer on their own and write book reviews summarizing the stories they read. Each time the children reached a 5-book benchmark, they were rewarded and recognized. Younger children were encouraged to read books with a family member.

We were thrilled when students enthusiastically took on this challenge, showing up with new book reports each week. In Northview Heights alone, almost 50 children participated! We were so encouraged by our initial success that we are continuing this program throughout the entire year!



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Foundations and Corporations

Fiscal Year ending
May 31, 2013

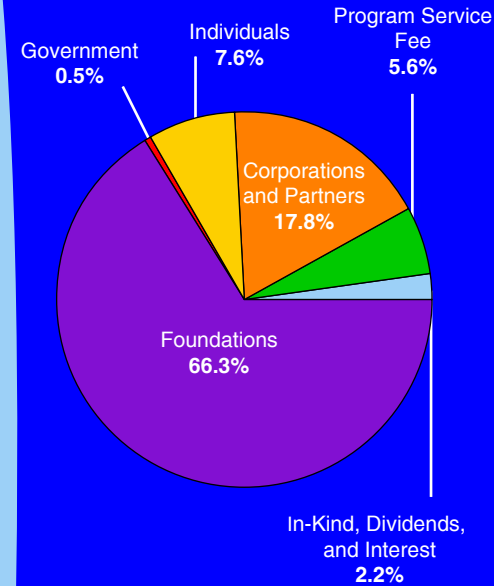
Revenues:

\$1,315,759

Adjusted Revenue:

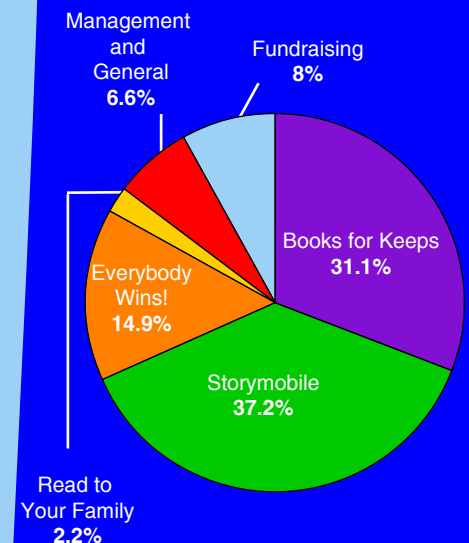
\$860,759*

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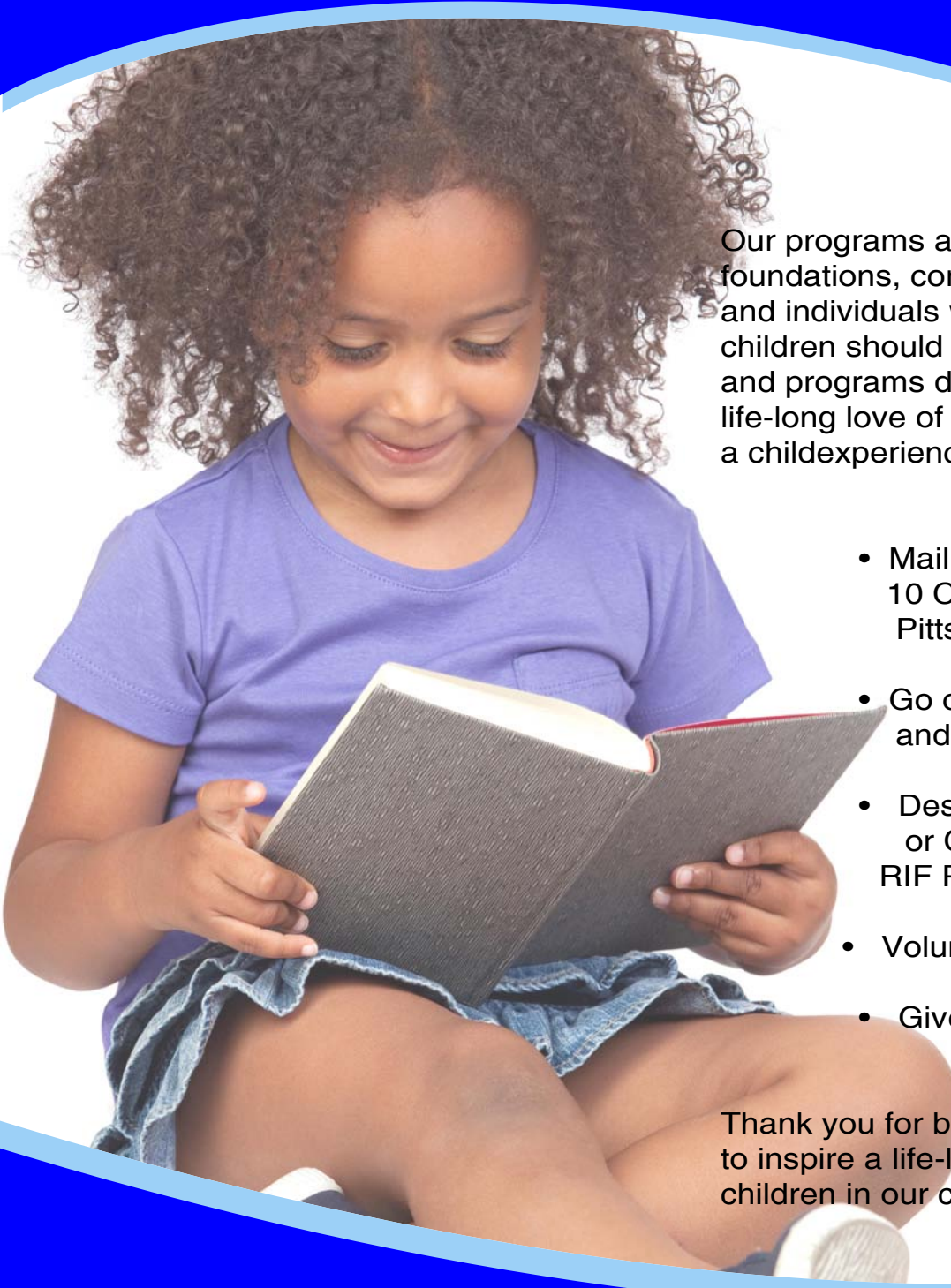
Expenses:

\$710,376



*Less future portions of multiple year grants

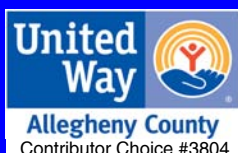
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