



Reading Is
Fundamental
Pittsburgh

Reading Is **FUN**damental

Pittsburgh



2020 - 2021 Annual Report

6/1/20 - 5/31/21



Numbers

1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10

Color Chart

- red
- orange
- yellow
- green
- blue
- purple
- pink
- black
- grey
- white
- brown



Dear Readers,

When compiling our annual report, I'm always delighted to reflect on all that RIF Pittsburgh has accomplished. This year certainly presented many obstacles, but we have met them with a renewed sense of purpose. I can't wait to share a few of the high-points, and challenges, we've experienced along the way!

After COVID-19 upended the world in March of 2020, we acted swiftly, responding to the existing and emerging needs of those we serve by brainstorming different avenues to get more books into kids' hands, homes, and hearts. With the help of friends in the community, **we've delivered nearly 88,000 books to more than 20,000 children this past program year!** We've also adapted with the rest of the world throughout different stages of the pandemic — from mainly trying to get more books to children by any means available, to installing classroom libraries, creating innovative virtual programming to reach kids in various types of learning environments, and gradually phasing back in to more and more in-person programming.

A few other exciting highlights of the year that you'll read more about inside this report include:

- Distributing thousands of diverse books written by Black and multicultural authors that reflect communities we serve, foster discussions about race in classrooms and households, and positively represent kids of all different backgrounds
- Enhancing our Book Babies program with continued virtual storytimes that have engaged a growing number of tots and their families, and continuing to develop and deliver literacy-rich materials directly to our families' homes
- Piloting a successful virtual mentoring program that allowed our kiddos to continue working with their mentors directly from their homes, keeping these relationships alive while they continued to read new books together
- Continually developing new and creative ways to keep children reading during this difficult time

To top it all off, we were overjoyed to finally return to many of our early childhood education centers, school sites, and summer camps for in-person programming this past summer! Kiddos and their teachers were as ecstatic to see us again as we were to see them. We took full advantage of the time we had with kids in person after so long apart by offering more books than ever before, with giveaways every week, to make up for lost time. And for sites we couldn't reach in person, we shipped books and activity kits directly to them, stopping at nothing to ensure every child still got a great story to enjoy. As you can tell, many things have begun looking up this past year at RIF Pittsburgh, and in the reading communities we've helped nurture.

Thank you for supporting us on this journey as we work to cultivate literate, self-empowered communities that foster educational equity. Together, we can emerge from this trying time stronger than ever.

Keep reading!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Florri Ladov". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Florri Ladov
Executive Director



"They are so delighted .. and the backpacks are wonderful , the books inside just blew the kids away."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RIF Pittsburgh's story began with one North Side resident embarking upon a mission to spread the joy of reading to neighborhood children, who gathered on her porch for storytimes. Since then, we've grown into a broad network of literacy support that reaches more than 20,000 children a year in neighborhoods of need all across Pittsburgh and Wilkinsburg. The pandemic has changed a lot of RIF's operations on the surface; but one thing that's stayed the same throughout is our determination to brighten kids' futures with books.

Each of our programs is designed to provide literacy support to kids at every stage of their development, in different aspects of their lives, to reinforce foundational skills. Our mission is to mitigate the literacy gap that leads to diminished opportunities for children to fulfill their potential in life. We serve seven major neighborhoods of need — East Liberty, Hazelwood, the Hill District, Homewood/East Hills, North Side, Southside and Wilkinsburg — where many kids confront extensive barriers to academic achievement. Book Babies invites little ones up to age three to a world of possibilities through reading; Storymobile teams enchant kids with stories and brain-boosting activities at early childhood centers, schools, and community events; Books for Keeps holds Reading Celebrations for pre-K to 6th-grade classes; and Everybody Wins! and RIF Readers offer literacy mentoring to pre-K through 3rd-graders.

The 2020-21 program year brought plenty of hurdles, but also exciting new partnerships, community-wide collaborations, and, as always, more books! From the onset, we quickly realized the necessity of finding new channels to get books into kids' eager hands. We teamed up with partners such as The Education Partnership, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, Riverstone Books, the PPG Foundation, Google, and Greater Pittsburgh Festival of Books among others to distribute engaging titles to children of all ages in a variety of creative new ways.

We also took direct action by delivering Book Babies bags filled with books, activities, and fun crafts directly to homes for tots -- and we expanded the supplies to include enough for their older siblings. We've stayed connected with Book Babies families by holding storytimes on Facebook Live twice a week, texting tips for building literacy, and offering incentives for participation. For older kiddos, we supplied books and activity kits to early childhood centers, schools, summer camps, and community learning hubs; provided classroom libraries to as many sites as possible, including those in neighboring communities, further extending our reach; shipped books to schools for giveaways; and created pre-recorded storytimes for teachers to share with kids — and that was only the first half of the year! We later started delivering biweekly, virtual programming in real-time during their school days and were thrilled to restart some in-person programming over the summer.

Things might never return to our previous sense of "normalcy," but we will continue evolving to best serve our RIF kids and their families no matter what. If this year has proven nothing else, it is that the communities we serve are resilient, and so are we.

*Please note, our program figures are for our program year 2020-2021 (school year 2020-21 and summer 2021).

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

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**"I can't wait to use
this lesson in the
classroom. Again
we thank you [for]
always caring for
our children's
literacy.
THANKS!!!!!!"**

- Instructor at COTRAIC EHS
Hazelwood in regard to receiving
new storytime kits

"We appreciate the opportunity to add new books to our library. It's not always in our budget to go out and buy new books, but our kids really love story time and hearing new and different stories."

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

RIF Pittsburgh's mission is rooted in issues of racial justice and educational equity. Every year, we strive to increase access to books, opportunities, and motivational relationships for thousands of underserved kids and their families across the city, vital resources that put the larger world at their fingertips and help to knock down barriers to their future success.

Research shows that the literacy gap targeted by our programming disproportionately impacts Black communities and kids from low-income backgrounds whom we primarily serve. Many RIF kids and their families face disparities in resources that speak to the larger, pressing issue of systemic racism plaguing our country. Left unchanged, this opportunity gap can lead to severe consequences — from high absenteeism and drop-out rates in school, to unemployment and underemployment, chronic health conditions, poor living conditions, incarceration, and as the Black Lives Matter movement has so powerfully underscored, even death — perpetuating a cycle of trauma.

As a literacy organization, we believe one of the most impactful ways we can act as an ally is through the narratives we help tell. Across programming, we have heightened our focus on books written by Black and multicultural authors about diverse experiences, reaffirming positive racial identities for kids.

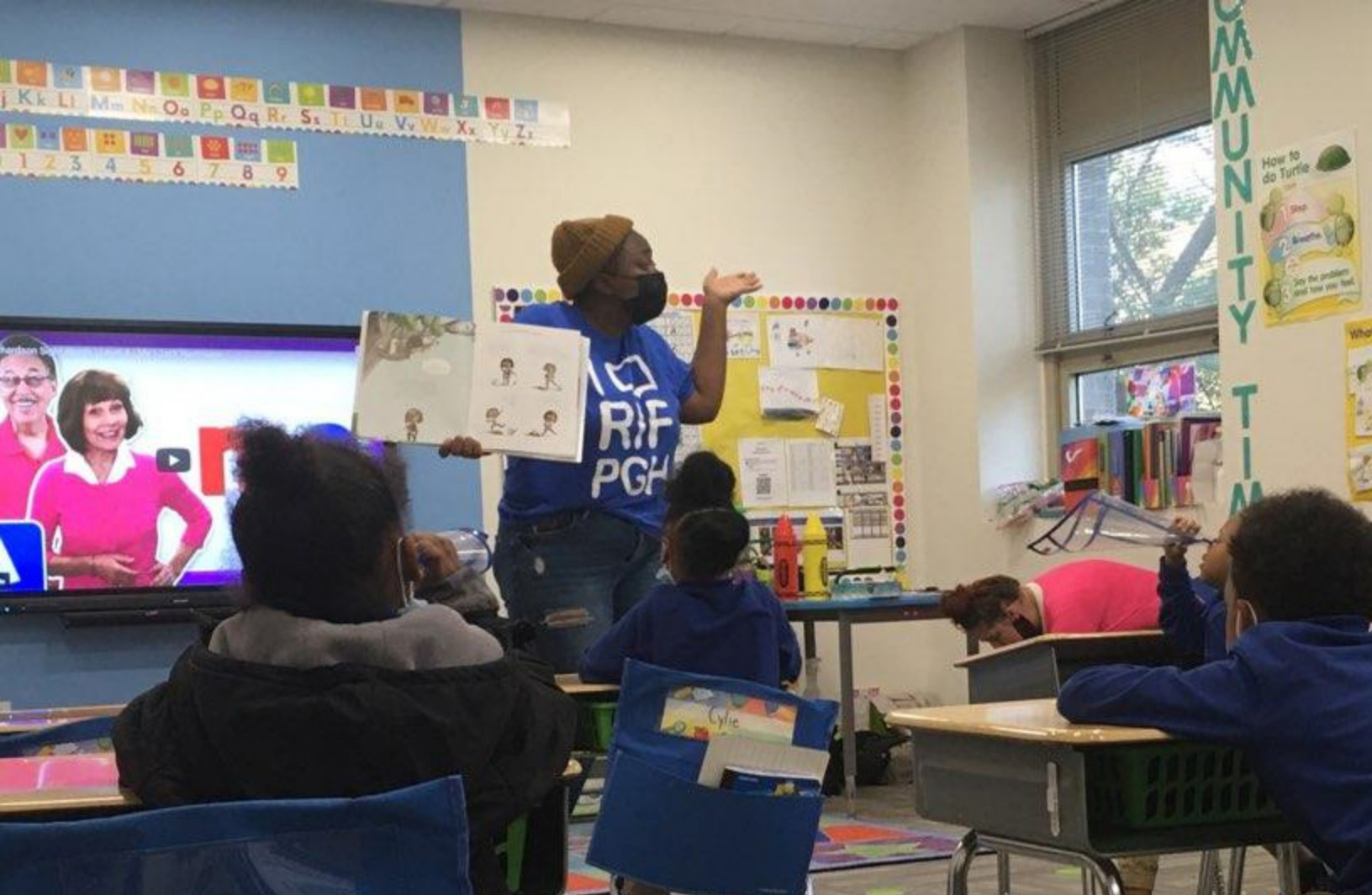
These books, among many more we've invested in, not only reflect the primarily Black neighborhoods we work alongside, but help improve feelings of self-worth, empathy, and motivation to read for the kids they represent. More broadly, embracing these books by using them in programming and adding them to children's home libraries makes community members feel included, valued, and visible.

In that same vein, we collaborated with the PPG Foundation on an ambitious, timely project called **"Read Today, Change Tomorrow."** Together, **our team filled 1,000 backpacks with five brand-new titles that celebrate diversity**, featuring prominent Black figures such as Mae Jemison, the first African American woman to travel to space; musical icon Beyoncé; and well-known American astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson. Each book selection contained a specially written note with information about the author and illustrator, and a description about the reason it was chosen, providing a tool for parents and caregivers to spark conversations with their little ones about race, and the incredible contributions Black Americans make to the world every day.

We are also looking inward, continuing to train our team on race and racial equity, building a safe space to self-examine and openly discuss these topics. There's still a long way to go before every child can attain the equitable education they deserve, but we're committed to stepping up, and stepping forward in the right direction.



"Parents were grateful. Thank you for sending us books inclusive of our demographic of children -- that is very intentional of the RIF program and much appreciated."



BOOKS FOR KEEPS

As our oldest and largest program, Books for Keeps (BFK) embodies the spirit of what we do at RIF. Each year, we coordinate with schools, preschools, and other learning communities all across the city to host three to five Reading Celebrations. At these literacy parties, the RIF team enthalls young readers with enthusiastic read-alouds; guides them in completing related hands-on activities; and lastly, presents them with a parting gift: an opportunity to select their very own book of choice to take home with them—and keep! These epic events celebrate the pure joy of reading, and bring that magic to life for children from inside their classrooms. It is a reading adventure unlike any other!

For the 2020-21 school year, we started off working directly with our site coordinators, shipping them select titles per grade level for ease of distribution to remote learners amid tight COVID restrictions.

As students slowly came back in person, we began hosting Reading Celebrations virtually and continued shipping giveaway books to help reignite our kiddos' love of reading. Beginning over the summer, we were finally able to start holding in-person programming at select sites, and plan to hold even more this fall.

In the 2020-21 program year, Books for Keeps:

- Served more than **70 sites** in Pittsburgh and Wilkinsburg throughout the year
- Provided nearly **42,000 books** to more than **13,000 children** in early childhood centers, schools, after-school programs and learning hubs in struggling neighborhoods

“Because of you, we were able to send every student home with a book of their own on the first day of school and allow each classroom to have a new selection of books in it.”



STORYMOBILE

The Storymobile is not only a library-on-wheels, but a portal that transports thousands of toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children to a world of adventure. Little ones excitedly clamber aboard to meet their fictional friends Black Panther, Gerald and Piggie, Lola, Grumpy Monkey, and Daniel the Tiger — to name a few — awaiting them on bookshelves. They sing songs, listen in wonder to stories read aloud by our passionate RIF team, and puzzle through problem-solving activities that help build both literacy and social-emotional skills.

Due to COVID-19, we've continually adapted Storymobile operations — from initially focusing on how to get more books into kids' hands through any channels we could find, to developing innovative ways to keep them invested in reading. As more early childhood centers reopened, we began delivering monthly storytime kits, filled with literacy resources and books; installed classroom libraries; and delivered live and pre-recorded virtual storytimes. This past summer, over a year after the pandemic struck, we relaunched in-person programming at many of our partner sites and plan to resume even more as restrictions permit.

In the 2020-21 program year, our Storymobile:

- Increased access to books and high-quality literacy programming for nearly **5,000 kids** in our seven target neighborhoods
- Provided nearly **4,000 classroom library books** for children to borrow
- Provided more than **26,000 books** for RIF kids to take home and keep, feeding their desire to grow as readers

“Our sites are loving the kits! It’s nice to have extra stories and activities to pull .”

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

For many tots, our Book Babies program is where their reading adventures begin. Expectant and new moms, with little ones up to age three, receive literacy, parenting, and oftentimes emotional support from our services. Close bonds form between our RIF staff and Book Babies families as we watch little ones grow up before our eyes — from taking some of their first steps in life to their first steps inside school.

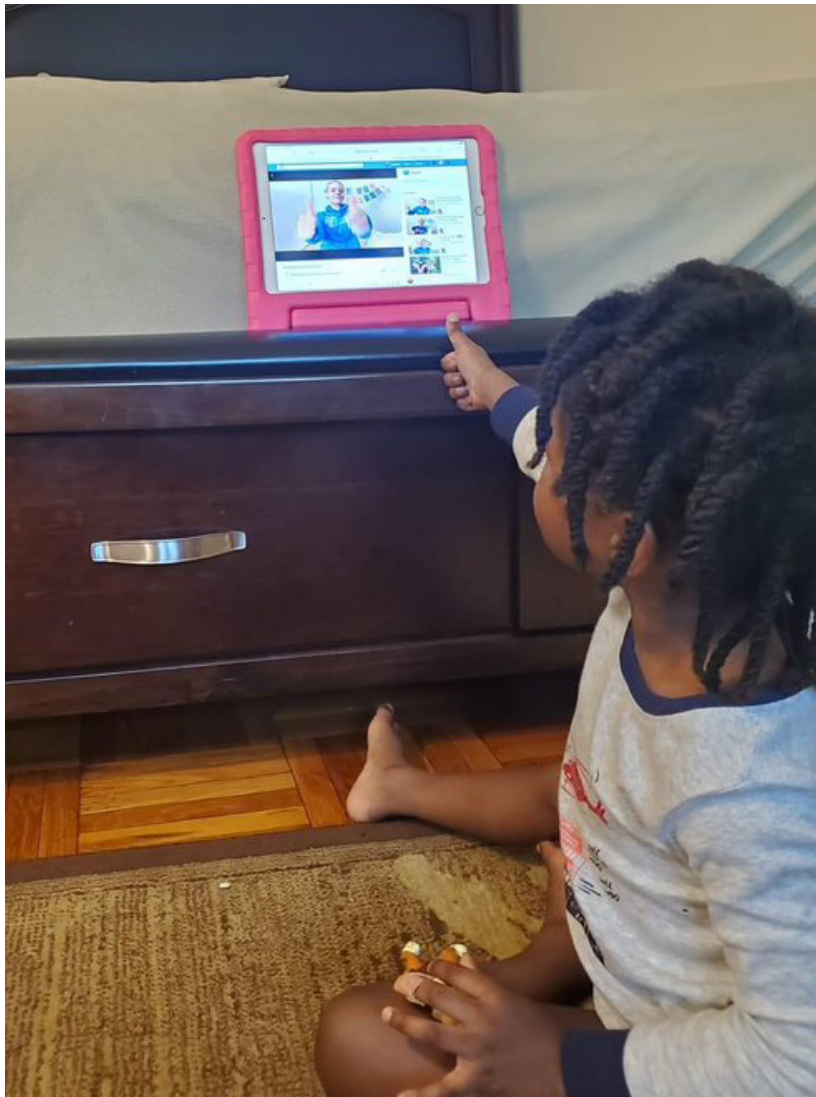
The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the struggle for many families to provide the educational resources needed to equip children for future success. To address this need, we have continued holding virtual storytimes twice a week, every week on Facebook Live. Families can tune in to these captivating read-aloud sessions to read, talk, sing, and play with their little ones live or watch the recording later!

Over this past year, we've discovered a silver lining of our online storytimes: the virtual program has helped to eliminate geographic barriers and scheduling conflicts which can prevent some of our families from attending storytimes in person, allowing for more moms to watch anytime — as many times as they wish.

Our Book Babies virtual "village" is helping to alleviate the isolation many new parents experience, with or without COVID-19 restrictions. Ms. Jordon is a friendly face that brings positivity and comfort to tots and their moms who attend regularly. Those who view live can also participate by sharing comments online in real-time, interacting with Ms. Jordon as she leads storytimes and with other parents who join in. Many parents enjoy sending us pictures of their tots absorbed in watching storytimes on televisions or computers in their homes.

In addition, we are delivering monthly resource bags stuffed with books, educational activities, and fun crafts directly to families' doorsteps, making families feel more supported than ever. Our blog offers instructions for completing activities and helps nurture pre-reading skills as well.

Lastly, we communicate with families by texting updates about bag deliveries, sharing tips for creating literacy-rich environments right in the safety of their own homes, and even meeting with them one-on-one to adjust programming based on their needs.



"We have loved the virtual storytimes! They have helped us so much- they have been a perfect amount of time and age-appropriate! It has been nice for the kids to have something to look forward to."

LITERACY MENTORING

Nothing can motivate a child to succeed like a trusted mentor who believes they can, and actively shows it by cheering them on.

Our two mentoring programs, school-based Everybody Wins! (EW) and corporate-based RIF Readers, recruit volunteers in the community willing to be that person in a child's life. Mentors meet with their paired reading buddy once a week, forming a close relationship that provides the encouragement needed for youngsters to grow into capable, confident readers.

Not only do our mentoring programs provide kids the opportunity to read with caring adults outside their families, but students in RIF Readers get a glimpse into the professional world. Our corporate program is a unique, immersive experience that exposes RIF kids, many of whom live in homes with fewer resources, to unfamiliar environments and enables them to see possibilities for their lives that they might not otherwise. As for our corporate mentors, this experience allows them to develop a personal investment in neighborhoods of need.

After COVID-19 hit, we resupplied kids' home libraries by sending out monthly mailings with activities, books, and even super-cool National Geographic Explorer magazines directly to their homes.

In addition, we encouraged our reading buddy pairs to stay connected — many of these relationships continued to flourish as mentors wrote touching letters, and some even created read-aloud videos for us to share with their little buddies.

Another successful innovation was our piloted online model of RIF Readers. For fall 2020, nearly thirty RIF Reader kids from Manchester Academic Charter School (MACS) and their mentors from UPMC met virtually over Zoom once per week. We supplied every child (and their buddies) with lots of books to read during these sessions, providing a robust, hands-on experience that gave kids the ability to keep turning those pages, even in a digital space. And based on our success, we are continuing RIF Readers virtually for the 2021-22 school year.

In the 2020-21 program year:

- Mentors from UPMC and RIF met virtually with **32 reading buddies** throughout the pandemic to read great stories together and share meaningful conversations
- Nearly **300 kids** in RIF Readers and Everybody Wins! received nearly **6,500 books and magazines**



2020-2021

“Not only were the books great choices, but the mentors really rocked for our kids. The first grade team really appreciated all of the hard work RIF put into this program for our young scholars.”



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Throughout the year, we've forged new partnerships to create a united front, collaborating with local foundations and organizations in the community to touch kids' lives at a time when our access to them was most limited.

Early in the year, The Education Partnership, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, and a group of local foundations joined forces with us on a project aptly called **"Boxes of Joy."** We filled **more than 1,700 boxes with an assortment of art supplies, toys, and of course, BOOKS chosen to inspire fun that were distributed to kids ages six to twelve** at our early childhood centers, schools, and summer camps, as well as Book Babies' siblings. These boxes shined a ray of light in kids' lives and brought a lot of smiles to faces as everyone struggled adjusting to a "new normal."

Thanks to the generosity of our partners at Riverstone Books, we were able to raise money to purchase and distribute exciting new graphic novels and diverse titles specifically to capture the attention of our pickiest, most reluctant readers in fourth through sixth grade during the summer of 2020, shortly after COVID-19 erased kids' access to books at schools and libraries practically overnight.

Our older RIF kids benefited greatly from these books that kept their minds engaged in learning and their desire to read fueled.

In the same spirit of teamwork, another highlight involved working with Google Pittsburgh and The Greater Pittsburgh Festival of Books on a project for **Remake Learning Days**, a national event recognized city-wide to celebrate learning. Together, we **purchased STEAM-focused books for more than 1,000 toddlers and preschoolers at more than 30 different locations across the city.** We also held an especially magical storytime at the Mt. Ararat Community Activity Center, where a RIF team member transformed into Readarella, the Pittsburgh Festival of Books Kids' mascot, to enchant kiddos with an unforgettable reading experience.

These are just a few of the many partnerships, new and old, that helped to keep our programs alive and our kiddos' homes filled with books!

"The facilitation from both sides was nothing short of amazing and we are so happy/hopeful that we can continue this partnership in the future. So much love for so many involved with this process!!!"

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Listing includes individuals and organizations who donated between 6/1/20- 5/31/21

Library Level (\$5,000+)

Alice R. Buchanan
Perry Colosimo
Kevin and Hope Dougherty
Barbara Jeremiah
Mary McDonough
Francis X. Solano Jr. M.D.
and Lenette Solano

Collection Level (\$1,000 - \$4,999)

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Ritchie Battle
Cary Blancett and Denise
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Charles Cost - Cost Company
Mark W. Rutherford and
Melissa B. Dodge
Elliot Gill
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Roger Humphries, Jr.
Roman Mitz
Nathan and Risha Irvin

"Wow!!! Just continuing to outdo yourselves over there at RIF!!! We are so appreciative of the love you all continue to pour out!!!"

Dr. and Mrs. Donald E. Jukes	Gary T. Patterson DMD	Alan Steinberg	Josie and Geoff Gibson
Elizabeth Kampmeinert	Kristin Pidgeon	Rona and Gary Sterling	Carol Golden
Elaine Karle	Mr. and Mrs. Gregory and	Julie Stumpf	The Scott Leib and
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Jack and Ellen Kessler	Fred and Ann Potthoff	Frank Tallarico	the Jewish Federation of
The Stefi L.Kirschner	Kim and John Power	Betsy and Tom Teti	Greater Pittsburgh
and Gilbert Z. Schneider	Jacqueline M. Primas	Dana Tomcanin	Gail Gratton
Philanthropic Fund of	Beverly Proie	Richard and Rae Tucker	Richard and Dana Green
the Jewish Federation of	Allie and Tom Quick	Sue Ulmer-Breeger	Robyn Gross
Greater Pittsburgh	R.T. Ramsay	Carlee Vargo	Nancy Harris
Reed Kovalan	The George Ramsy Family	Sybil P. Veeder	Tim Hennessy
John Lagnese	Kim Reilly	Michael and Clare	Mr. and Mrs. Marshall and
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William and Dianne	Marc Unangst and Ilyssa	Louise Kay Woodside	Deborah Holtschlag
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Robert and Barbara Park	Judith Starr		John Shimkus

"Thank you again soooo much the kids were so appreciative!"

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Ellen Sullivan
Jane Susack
Divya Thadani
Megan Tomaino
Beatrice Vasser
Christopher Winters
Sarah Wissinger
Teresa Wolken
Keith Wolters
Barbara H. Wright
Betty Yeazel



“This is awesome! You guys continue to amaze me on how hard you work to get reading materials to kiddos”

FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS

Agile Promotions LLC
A. J. and Sigismunda
Palumbo Charitable
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Allegheny Foundation
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Aurora Reading Club of
Pittsburgh
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The Burke Foundations
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Duquesne Light

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A+ Schools
Allegheny County Early
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Beverly Jewel Wall Lovelace
Afterschool Programs
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
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Pittsburgh
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Department of Human
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The Education Partnership
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Hill District Early Literacy
Initiative
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The Homeless Children's
Education Fund
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The P. R. I. D. E. Program
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Reading Is Fundamental
Reading Ready Pittsburgh
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The University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child
Development
Uptown Partners of
Pittsburgh
Urban League of Greater
Pittsburgh
Wilksburg School District
YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh

"All I can say is thank you!!! Our scholars love the program and will love to get some new books!!!!"

VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who donate their time to
RIF Pittsburgh each year!

Although we were not able to work directly with most of our students this past year, we thank all of our volunteers who are patiently waiting to be able to safely return to our schools.

Bogac Ayhan	Luci Carter	Michaela Flood	Sonya Koros
Lynda Brimage	Carlos Carter	Ed Flynn	Gosia Kosturek
Patty Alexander	Neela Casile	Chelsea Ford	Winnie Kredell
Justin Ameno	Christopher Cercone	Cindy Franc	Natalie Kreter
Laura Ammon	Scott Cessar	Clare Gallagher	Mary Adele Krolkowski
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Marcia Bandes	Grant Coffield	Terri Glueck	Shannon Lee
Tabitha Banks	Meredith Colaizzi	Tracy Goff	JoEllen Leech
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Jim Barry	Tim Cone	Jessie Gorby	Jacob Lewis
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Patty Bauccio	Katherine Cooper	Kevin Grady	Kate Link
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Diane Berman	Dana Cunningham	Samantha Hartz	Brian Malloy
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Carolyn Boucek	Aaron Dolan	Mary Robb Jackson	Andy McKenna
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Marva Brown	Melvin El	Kate Kelly	Jenny Michaux
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Sherry Bruner	Peter Fernie	Andrea Ketzal	Cooper Miller
Beth Brunins	Emily Ferri	Joan Kimmel	Faith Miller
Jessica Buechli	Rebecca Fischer	Chris Klemstein	Katherine Mills
Bianka Cable	Joan Fiset	Lynn Klim	Ashley Modany
Jennifer Cairns	Haley Fitzgerald	Brian Knight	Greg Molinda
Bob Campedel	Heather Fletcher	Adam Kolko	Lynn Monahan

"You guys rock! Thank you soooo much. I can already see the impact this is going to have on these kids getting them excited to read"

Laurin Moore
Shirley Morelli
Robert Morgan
Mark Morrison
Judy Moser
Mackenzie Moylan
Danielle Mundekis
Joe Murray
Mary Ellen Muth
Emily Neff
Jen Neiwsonger
Liz Nelson
Kathleen Newmeyer
Stacey Norrington
Kristen Novak
Christie Novak
Kaitlyn Nykwist
Rebecca Obley
Neill O'Brien
Lindsey O'Donnell
Katelyn Oeler
Katelyn Oeler
Amy Ogren
Nile Ong
Tina Packer
Gretchen Panchik
Edward Patalski
Chadni Patel
McClung Patricia
Christian Percy
Nicki Perfetti
Lisa Perks
Mike Pest
Kristen Pillitteri
Maria Pisano
Ileen Plietz
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Kate Pomerleau
Jamie Profaizer
Kevin Pugh
Vernell Ralph
Cindy Ransom
Meaghan Regal
Kim Reilly
Abby Resnick
Elizabeth Rhodes
Amanda Ritchie
Vandra Robinson
Cynthia Rose
Sandra Rose
Leslie Rotstein
Paula Rulin
Tenay Russel
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Claudia Saitz
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Mary Scott
Barb Semich
Sean Shapiro
Linda Shaw
Chasta Shaw
Jennifer Shepler
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Jonathan Simms
Sonja Simonson
Zayani Sims
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Helen Wigger
Lauren Wiley
John Williams
Jordon Williams
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Mark Yost
anet Yuhasz
Kelly Yurchison
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***Everybody Wins!
Corporate Partners**

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MSA
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Pittsburgh Public Schools
Pittsburgh Technology
Council
SMS Siemag
Trying Together
Tucker Arensburg

***RIF Readers Corporate
Partners**

Duquesne Light
Eckert Seamans
PNC Grow Up Great
UPMC



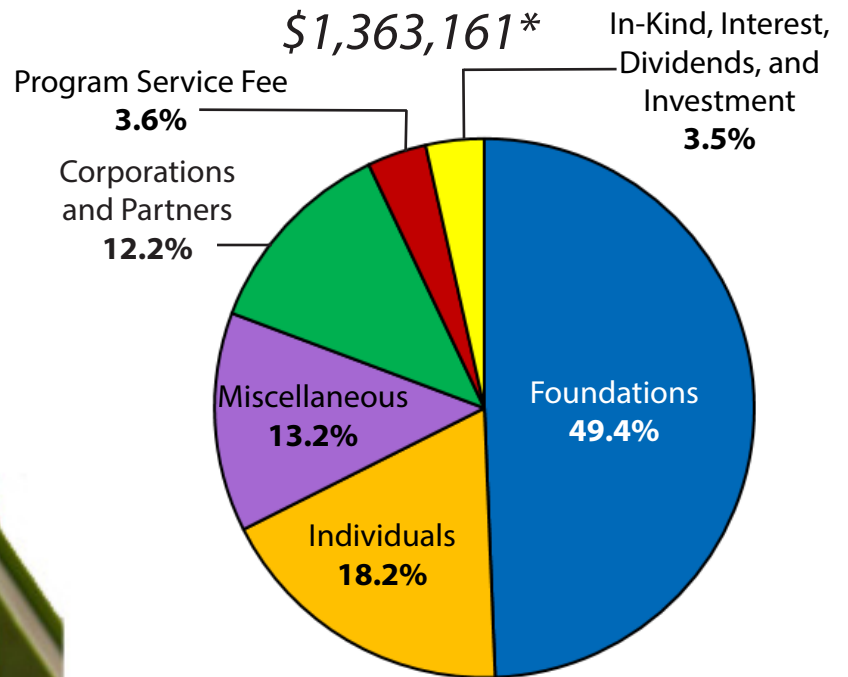
"Thanks for being with us today. I know the students enjoyed the time with you. It was great to see the 4th and 5th graders being silly and not worrying about being 'cool'"

FINANCIALS

Total Revenue:
\$1,813,013

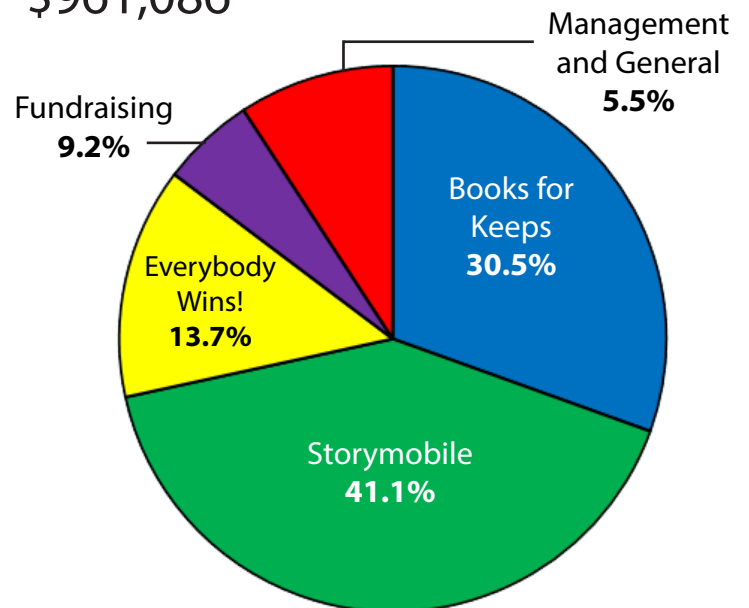
Adjusted Revenue:

\$1,363,161*



Total Expenses:

\$961,086^



**Less future portions of multi-year grants plus cash receipts from prior multi-year grants*

^Less depreciation

"I cannot believe RIF is almost over. It has been such an awesome year filled with some wonderful reading selections. Thank you so much for continuing this program, even during the pandemic."



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 RIF Pittsburgh at:
10 Children's Way, Suite 300
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
- Go online to www.rifpittsburgh.org and click on "Donate"
- Designate your United Way (#3804) contribution to RIF Pittsburgh
- Volunteer to be a Reading Buddy
- Give us a call at 412-321-8022

Thank you for being part of our mission to inspire the children in our community through reading!



Reading Is
Fundamental
Pittsburgh

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