

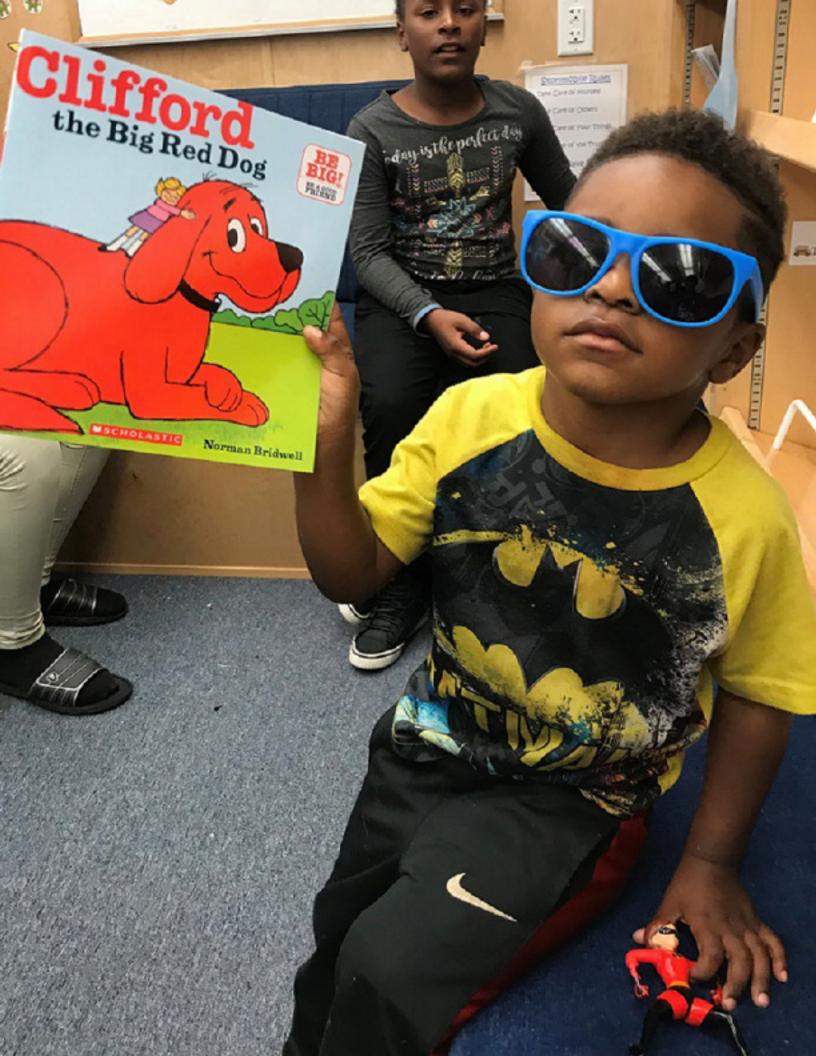
Reading Is **Fundamental Pittsburgh**

Reading Is FUNdamental

Pittsburgh



2018-2019 Annual Report



Dear Friends,

It's been another whirlwind year here at RIF Pittsburgh, forming new partnerships, strengthening existing collaborations, and continuing to build a team bursting with creativity and energy. With the addition of our fourth Storymobile, we now serve over 23,000 kids and put over 104,000 much-needed books into hands and homes!

Our programs are thriving. RIF Readers is making a buzz in corporate Pittsburgh. We are now matching over 100 children with Reading Buddies at four office sites. Together with our Everybody Wins! school-based program, that's nearly 300 at-risk students blossoming every week under the personal attention of a literacy mentor.

Our Books for Keeps team is celebrating reading across the city with fresh books and activities under the guidance of a new director, whose 14 years of experience as a children's and teen librarian is helping to reinvigorate our oldest and largest program.

Our most visible program, on our fleet of libraries-on-wheels, has come alive with the animated leadership of our Storymobile director, a master puppeteer. Read-aloud sessions conclude with a RIF song she wrote that kids love to sing; class after class is delighted by the videos she creates featuring Storymobile staff. Programming devised by our new education director, a veteran teacher, is receiving raves for sharpening literacy and school-readiness skills. Rounding out our staff is a retired journalist who writes our grants and reports with a firsthand perspective gained on the Storymobile.

Book Babies has "grown up" to be a popular fixture in our public housing communities, modeling healthy parenting, hand-in-hand with early literacy. This support group for families with tots is led by a young mom who served as an EW! mentor and on AmeriCorps before joining our team. She is just one of the wonderful additions gained through our AmeriCorps pipeline, which allows people to explore community service and nonprofits, and enables us to hire staff who we know believe in our mission.

Other AmeriCorps "graduates" on staff also wear many hats: Besides laughing with kids over "Punk Farm" or making ice cream graphs, they do terrific work behind the scenes: researching and ordering our giveaway books, searching out titles that feature diversity in characters, families, settings, cultures and themes; handling social media and texting; designing our calendars and fliers; and mentoring the current AmeriCorps members.

The final, crucial piece of our RIF team is you. I'm excited to share our vision with you, and immensely grateful for your ongoing support. We couldn't do what we do without you! Together, we are enriching lives and building a community of opportunity for all of Pittsburgh's children.

Warmly,

Executive Director

- Laday

"I get way more books on my bookshelf and become a better reader by reading the books I get."







"At the end of each session my reading buddy typically said 'I wish I could come here every day,'
which was very touching to hear."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RIF Pittsburgh's story is one of direct action and community engagement. In a city where more than half of third-graders from low-income homes can't read at grade level, we're a consistent presence in children's lives. Many teens tell us they feel like they grew up on the Storymobile! Our network of coordinated literacy support delivers programming to more than 23,000 kids, provides resources for their families, early childhood centers, schools and community groups, and puts over 104,000 books a year into the hands and homes that need them most.

We'd like to be able to say that it is all fun and games in RIF programs, and certainly we see many happy, smiling faces on the Storymobile and in Books for Keeps Reading Celebrations. But there is an urgent reason for the work that we do, and a real need for your active support.

The road to literacy and educational parity is not a simple one for many of the children we serve, whose lives may be impacted by difficult situations at home or in their neighborhoods. Likewise, there are no simple solutions to the achievement gap many RIF kids face, starting before kindergarten, lasting throughout school, and ultimately affecting many a career path. Still, we can and do make a difference. Our efforts focus on "high-leverage" areas, practices proven by research to most improve children's learning and development. We reach out to youngsters early and often. We surround them with quality resources and positive experiences. We read to them, challenge them, laugh with them. We engage their minds, their teachers, their families.

We show up for the children in Pittsburgh's disadvantaged communities, but we can only do that because our RIF supporters stand with us: our extensive network of sites, educators and community partners; the hundreds of mentors who devote an hour, week after week, to nurture their young Reading Buddies; the foundation, corporate and individual donors whose generosity makes our work possible.

As we approach our 40th year, we plan to continue helping these most vulnerable young Pittsburghers write their own next chapters. We invite you to join us in bringing those stories to life.

*Please note, our program figures are for our program year 2018-2019 (school year 2018-19 and summer 2019).

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 AM SO HAPPY TO READ. YOUR BOOKS REALLY HELP ME TO READ AND MY BRAIN IS REALLY GETTING SMARTER."

Student at Duquesne Education Center



BOOKS FOR KEEPS

Our oldest and largest program sums up RIF Pittsburgh's origin story, our mission, and our vision moving forward – in the same three little words that evoke heart-felt cheers from kids, when we tell them at the end of each Reading Celebration what they're about to get: books for keeps!

Nurturing literacy by filling children's home libraries with quality, age-appropriate books is the centerpiece of the program, but BFK delivers more than books. Our high-energy, book-and-kid-loving team visits classrooms 3-5 times a year with programming designed to inspire, motivate and support children at risk of academic failure.

Reading Celebrations combine the one-two punch of a terrific read-aloud with an interactive activity that complements a main idea of the story. Then comes the knockout finale – a book of their choice to take home and keep.

In the 2018-19 program year, Books for Keeps:

- Presented Reading Celebrations at 110 sites across the city
- Engaged over 16,000 students in early childhood centers, schools, and after-school programs in struggling neighborhoods
- Provided almost 50,000 books to the children who need them the most
- Partnered with the United Way on the Be A Middle School Mentor program, serving 150 pre-teens and their mentors

MATH AND SCIENCE

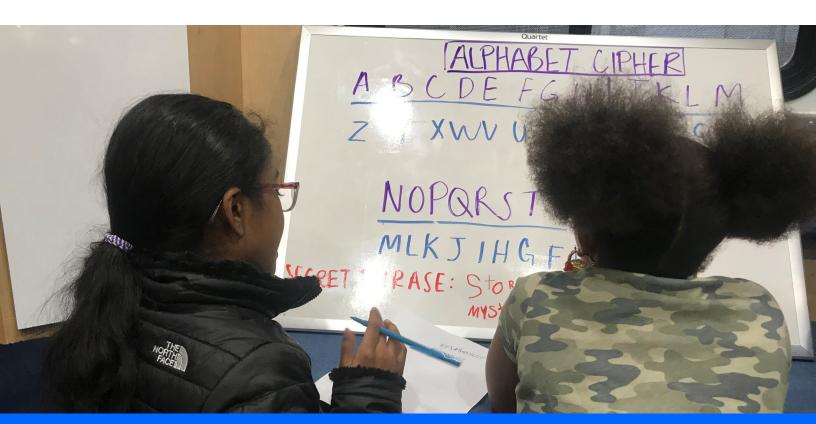
We are increasingly incorporating STEAM-themed books, activities and resources across our programming with the intent to improve literacy in math and science along with reading, and to mitigate the competitive disadvantage that research tells us follows children from low-income backgrounds as they consider options for post-secondary education and the workplace.

Engaging children in math and science activities encourages curiosity and a passion for discovery. We start by reading aloud books that explore the universe through the lens of STEAM, then introduce a hands-on experiment to flesh out the theme of the story. Occasionally, we bring in volunteers or community partners to talk to children about careers in STEAM fields.

These books reinforce skills and topics covered in our programming or in the classroom, spark curiosity by exposing students to new material, and promote out-of-school reading. Children love to explore connections between books and the world around them!

In the 2018-19 program year, some STEAM examples:

- Exposing kids to read-alouds including "Mae Among the Stars" about African-American astronaut and brilliant scientist Mae Jemison; "After the Fall," a fanciful retelling of Humpty, ending with the egg hatching into a beautiful bird; and "Sam and Dave Dig a Hole," a Caldecott Honor book of two brothers determined to unearth "something spectacular." Paired activities included black-light constellations, origami birds, and air-dry "fossils"
- Exploring "What Color Is My World: The Lost History of African-American Inventors" by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, with activities including balloon-powered car races and building challenges, to name a few
- Continuing to expand the science titles in our lending and giveaway inventories, featuring "Fly Guy," National Geographic science- and nature-themed books, and the "Who Would Win" series, comparing and contrasting creatures' strengths and weaknesses based on anatomy, behavior and other factors.



EVERYBODY WINS!

Children thrive on attention – and kids who read one-on-one with an adult, frequently and consistently from a young age, are significantly more likely to become proficient readers. EW! matches K-3 students with volunteer mentors, who come to their school once a week to read, discuss books, and spend time together developing positive relationships.

In EW!, kids who struggle with reading enjoy hugs and the support of a special someone who is there, week after week, just for them. Their classroom becomes a community of learners, sharing favorite books, discussing plot twists or characters. Children who are hesitant to read aloud in October are often reading nonstop to their Reading Buddies by year's end!

We text EW! families twice a week year-round to help them engage with their fledgling readers and to keep the book talk flowing. After school and in summer, texts let them know when the Storymobile will be in their neighborhood, and many families come together to pick out a good read.

In the 2018-19 program year, Everybody Wins!:

- Hosted weekly one-on-one mentoring sessions at four PPS schools: Allegheny, Arlington, Faison, and Weil, matching over 180 K-3 students with community volunteers to share great books and conversation
- Provided a giveaway book each month to help build home libraries
- Supplied kids with a backpack stuffed with six books they'd picked out for summer reading, and mailed them two more during vacation



"She loved having a reading buddy. I loved the books that came home to share.

We both love reading and this helped us read together."



RIF READERS

The excitement continues! RIF Readers, now in its third year, is giving more and more students a seat at the table in corporate Pittsburgh, bringing pre-K to third-graders to Downtown offices for a weekly meeting of the minds with successful professionals, taking literacy mentoring to the next level.

Children enjoy all the benefits of in-school mentoring – great books, quality individual attention from an enthusiastic volunteer, a supportive classroom – plus, the corporate-based model exposes youngsters to career paths and possibilities that could plant new dreams and alter their choices in school and in life. These relationships go beyond helping children learn to read, providing them with resources, opportunities, and motivation to envision a better future for themselves through education.

RIF Readers also provides a tremendous growth opportunity to serve even more children. With fewer demands on time and travel, corporations find a ready supply of in-house mentors, making it easier than ever to recruit and expand.

The program has grown from our original corporate partner, Eckert Seamans, serving 22 second-graders in 2017, to four corporate partners serving over 100 students this fall, as UPMC and Duquesne Light join Eckert-Seamans and repeat host PNC! We are excited about the expansion possibilities and hope one day to see RIF Readers students visiting corporate offices all over the city.



STORYMOBILE

"It's Storymobile day!" Every two weeks, RIF's libraries-on-wheels visit over 100 early-childhood centers, preschools, kindergartens and after-school programs across the city, whisking children away to story land like Aladdin on his magic carpet.

For an enchanted half-hour, kids sing songs, read a story, play a "game" that builds early literacy, and – the icing on the cake – pick a book to borrow or keep. For our littlest patrons, story time promotes kindergarten-readiness, introducing and reinforcing literacy, social and classroom skills in an engaging way. For our school-age students, the Storymobile focuses on making learning fun – and puts books in their hands to keep them reading outside of class.

Teachers whose classes attend the Storymobile report a significant improvement in children's enjoyment of reading, choosing to read during free time, pre-literacy or literacy skills, and overall readiness for school. We field constant educator requests for links to our activities and resources they can borrow.

At community time stops in our target neighborhoods, we invite children, teens and adults to climb on up and choose a book to keep. We provide an inviting space for readers, and we use it to encourage families to make inviting spaces and regular routines for reading at home.

In the 2018-19 program year, our Storymobiles:

- Traveled to more than 100 sites, serving over 6,400 children, in our target communities: East Liberty, Hazelwood, Hill District, Homewood/ East Hills, North Side, South Side, and Wilkinsburg
- Helped children self-select more than 19,000 books to keep during our bi-weekly visits in public housing communities and after-school programs, as well as during our Reading Celebrations 3-4 times a year
- Loaned nearly 19,000 books to children from our circulating Storymobile collection, and loaned over 2,200 books and resource materials to educators

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The importance of family involvement in a child's reading proficiency can hardly be overstated. Family engagement is critical to youngsters'"healthy development, school readiness, graduation, and subsequent success," the Global Family Research Project reported in 2017, citing "a substantial and solid" body of research.

RIF takes that message to heart! Our dedicated team of Storymobile engagement specialists brave tricky terrain and challenging weather year-round to bring literacy programming, resources and, of course, books right to the doorsteps of families who need them most.

Our Book Babies program, enrolling families with tots from birth to age 3 in all of our target neighborhoods, urges parents to Read, Sing, Talk and Play – Every Day! with their little ones. Weekly lap-sit story times aboard the Storymobile connect these families with others in their neighborhood, providing a support group surrounding healthy parenting and literacy, and helping to cut through the isolation that stay-at-home caregivers may experience with a new baby.

Our smiling, energetic team members model reading aloud, and lead songs, games and crafts that get moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas clapping, dancing and singing along! Each week, families take home a themed bag stuffed with board books, manipulative or cuddly toys, seasonal activities, and words to fingerplays and rhymes to re-create story time at home. Any time they can't attend, they are invited to stop by a Storymobile community time for a Book Babies bag, so they never have to miss a week of learning.

Babies grow up so fast, and so has our program! We are now offering Book Babies not only in public housing communities but in other locations in our target neighborhoods, in partnership with groups such as the Hilltop Family Support Center. Many families also know and love us through our attendance at special events and community time stops, where we invite everyone onto the Storymobile to find a great read. Our updated selection of books for adults has been a huge draw, and it's so motivational for kids to see the grownups in their lives drop everything and come running when the Storymobile rolls down its steps! We even have a new song, written by our Storymobile director and recorded with RIF kids singing adorably, that we play on external speakers to let residents know when one of our mobile libraries is in the neighborhood.

We have added more and more sites outside public housing to our stops in target neighborhoods, such as at Homewood Family Support Center and Carnegie library branches, often coordinated to catch parents and kids as they're leaving library programs. And we have made great strides in offering a larger selection of more diverse books, in programming as well as in our giveaways, recognizing that children need to see themselves, their families and their communities reflected in the books they read. Week after week during community time, we watch as youngsters pick up a book and mimic story time for friends or family. Kids who are just dipping their toes into the magical world of reading are terrific ambassadors for literacy!



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Listing includes individuals and organizations who donated between 6/1/18-5/31/19

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Kim Reilly **Abby Resnick** Molly Richter Carolyn Ristau Amanda Ritchie David Rockman Cvnthia Rose Leslie Rotstein **Amy Roy Amber Ruder** Zena Ruiz Paula Rulin Claudia Saitz **Diego Santos** Danielle Scalise **Paul Scherrer** Cathie Schmidt Mary Scott Carol Scott Barb Semich Sean Shapiro Linda Shaw Chasta Shaw Cynthia Shay Susan Shepard Jennifer Shepler

Sheryl Silverman

Sonja Simonson

Dan Sinclair

Sarah Siplak

Trevor Smith

Timothy Smith

Verris Smith Kiersten Snyder Bob Starzynski Ellen Stein Jolene Steinmetz Larry Story **David Strasser** Julie Stumpf Rosalie Suchevich Elaina Taube Jessica Taucher Amanda Thomas William Tolliver Karel Ulizio Alexandra Valliant Katy Vernacchia Karen Viggiano Alison Viola **Barbara Welding** Michael Wessell Ellen Wieczorek Rick Wiedman Anita Williams Allie Williams John Williams Maureen Willoughby **Tess Wilson Bridget Wissinger Bunny Wolff** Mark Yost Andrew Zima Lorraine Zwickle

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*RIF Readers Corporate Partners Eckert Seamans

PNC Grow Up Great



"She is super kind to me; she makes me feel so happy when I am sad; she turns my frown up and around; she makes me happy when she talks to me and when we have conversations...<3"

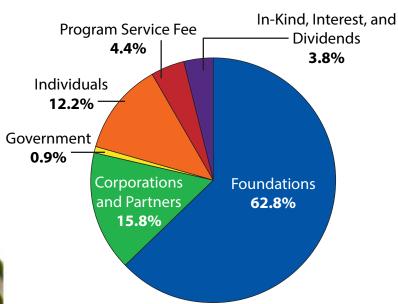
FINANCIALS

Total Revenue:

\$1,276,266

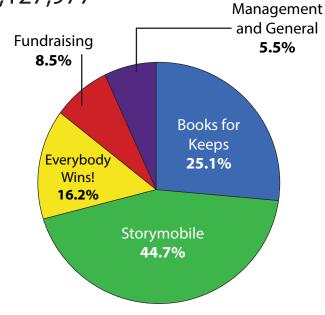
Adjusted Revenue:

\$1,186,266*



Total Expenses:

\$1,127,977^



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

^Less depreciation

"The most significant benefit is to have the opportunity to choose books since we don't have a school library. The kids love it!"



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





