



Reading Is
Fundamental
Pittsburgh

Reading Is **FUN**damental Pittsburgh



2021—2022 Annual Report

6/1/21—5/31/22



Story
mobile

Dear RIF Friends and Families,

Once again, this past year has been packed full of adventures, challenges and fun stories to share! Together, we have reached new milestones and overcome many different obstacles on our mission to increase literacy. As always, it gives me great joy to highlight some of the ways in which our RIF community has helped to cultivate enthusiasm and a lifelong love for reading in our city's children!

Amid the changing landscape of COVID-19, we have continued to provide engaging literacy programming to feed children's appetite for learning; expanded our inventory of multicultural, contemporary books that celebrate diversity, foster racial equity and motivate children to read more; engaged our community partners and families in promoting literacy along with us; and lastly, offered encouragement, support and resources to families, caregivers and educators who can truly make all the difference in a child's "outcome."

In the 2021-22 program year, we successfully delivered more than 71,000 books, including many high-interest, culturally diverse titles, to nearly 23,000 underserved children!

Moreover, this past year has further underscored the importance of the close relationships we've worked hard to establish with our site coordinators, teachers, kids, families and communities. Our guiding philosophy holds true: the key to improving literacy and children's futures is through relationship-building and a community-based approach that involves everyone in the work we do.

Last year marked a huge turning point in our COVID-era journey as we continued phasing back to more in-person programming. As long-awaited, we finally returned to many of our school sites in person to hold Books for Keeps (BFK) Reading Celebrations. Kiddos and teachers alike in preschool through sixth-grade classrooms were overjoyed to see us again and participate in our fun-filled literacy parties! At the end of each visit, following our greatest party tradition, every child got the opportunity to select a giveaway book to take home – and keep forever! To top it all off, this summer, we restarted holding biweekly community time stops and weekly Book Babies sessions aboard our beloved Storymobiles, which had remained parked for over two years due to the pandemic. The kiddos and RIF staff couldn't be more thrilled to be back aboard our enchanted libraries-on-wheels, building new connections and seeing familiar faces! Thank you for supporting us as we strive to bring the joy of reading to kids, and combat the learning loss that many children have experienced over the past few years. We must work harder than ever to provide our city's children with the tools and encouragement needed to fulfill their brightest futures.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Florri Ladov".

Florri Ladov
Executive Director



"Thank you for getting that book I wanted! I'm going to read it before bed with my mom...but not all of it, maybe just 3 chapters at a time."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For over 40 years, RIF Pittsburgh has been a leader in children's literacy development. Starting with one North Side resident reading to neighborhood children on her porch in 1981, our network of literacy support has grown to reach more than 20,000 children in seven target neighborhoods of need across Pittsburgh and Wilkinsburg each year.

Every day, we intentionally address inequities that our RIF kids and families face by immersing young children in literacy-rich environments, creating positive experiences centered around reading, establishing motivational relationships with them, and promoting the message that reading is both fun and fundamental to their future success. We offer kids numerous opportunities to explore their unique interests by self-selecting books from a wide array of culturally relevant, age-appropriate titles to take home and cherish forever.

Our largest and oldest program, **Books for Keeps (BFK)**, has served as a model, visiting pre-K to 6th-grade classrooms 3-5 times a year to host exciting reading celebrations that entail storytime, an activity, and the chance for each child to pick a book to *keep*. Over the years, we have added and expanded our **Storymobile** program for early childhood through school-age kiddos; **Book Babies** for parents and tots, up to age three, that provides biweekly storytimes, as well as books, literacy activities, and educational toys to families to strengthen at-home literacy development; and two literacy mentoring programs, school-based **Everybody Wins! (EW!)** and corporate-based **RIF Readers**, that pair early and emerging readers with volunteer mentors for weekly reading sessions.

This past program year, with concerns about the pandemic easing, we were able to phase back in to even more in-person programming. During biweekly visits, kids in our Storymobile program enjoyed interactive read-alouds and engaging literacy activities led by passionate RIF staff, right from inside their classrooms. Many of our school sites also welcomed us back into their buildings, allowing older students in our BFK program to participate in unforgettable reading celebrations 3 times throughout the school year, and select brand-new books to keep. For schools we could not yet reach in person, we continued to ship giveaway books directly to them, ensuring that every child still was able to select new books! Book Babies families continued to read, talk, sing and play together during our virtual storytimes on Facebook Live. Although EW! was still suspended, our RIF Readers literacy mentoring program continued to run and grow virtually. The best news is that this summer, we finally started bringing kiddos back on our Storymobile trucks for biweekly community time stops and weekly Book Babies visits, to everyone's delight!

As we begin this next chapter of our journey, we look forward to returning to all in-person programming this fall!

*Please note, our program figures are for our program year 2021-2022 (school year 2021-22 and summer 2022).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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"The relationships built between mentor and student were amazing."

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

"I wanted to reach out to let you know that our Reading Celebrations are fantastic. The RIF team members are wonderful. There has been such positive feedback both from the students and staff about them."

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

RIF's network of literacy programming targets neighborhoods of need where students were in academic crisis long before COVID. Overall, their homes have fewer books and they've spent considerably less time reading one-on-one with an adult. RIF kids are predominantly Black and low-income, the two demographics in Pittsburgh schools whose 3rd-graders register the lowest literacy and the greatest disparity in achievement. According to the 2021 A+ Schools' Report to the Community, approximately 66% of all Black students are reading below grade level. In addition, the report noted a 37% increase in rates of chronic absenteeism among elementary grades during the 2020-21 school year, with higher rates of chronic absenteeism overall at schools with a large population of economically disadvantaged students.

In the last two and a half years, our RIF kids have been even more acutely impacted by the effects of COVID-19. A report by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights found that the pandemic has unsurprisingly taken a significant toll on students' academic learning, as well as their mental and emotional health. Moreover, **the loss was even greater among students of color, with declines in reading scores nearly 50 percent larger for Black students than white students in some cases.** Without intervention, early studies suggest that students of color are also "disproportionately" at risk of slipping further behind as many families continue to grapple with consequences of the pandemic. Echoing these findings, many of our teachers are specifically requesting books and resources leveled down to account for the pronounced loss of learning they have witnessed among students amid the pandemic. In short, our RIF kids need our support now more than ever. Given all the trauma students have endured, we also realize the

importance of bringing a little positivity back into their lives. Our core literacy programs help to create fun, safe, nurturing spaces for kids to grow together, developing both academic and social-emotional skills that will help set them up for success. As a literacy organization, we believe one of the most impactful ways we can help advance racial justice is through the narratives we shine a light on. Our "Read Today, Change Tomorrow" initiative is an ongoing effort to promote racial equity, ensuring that across all of our programming, we are intentionally providing a high ratio of powerful contemporary titles, created by Black authors and illustrators, that enable families of all backgrounds to celebrate and find inspiration in the lives, voices, and rich experiences of Black culture and communities. Our aim is to highlight books that strengthen children's voices, help them develop positive racial identities, and elevate their thinking about the great, wide world of possibilities open to them.



"The kits are awesome! We especially love receiving books with a social-emotional theme and books that are racially/ethnically diverse."



BOOKS FOR KEEPS

Our oldest and largest program, Books for Keeps (BFK), has remained a constant source of joy and provided a steady pipeline of terrific new reads for our RIF kids at a time when their access to books has never been more restricted. Last fall, as highly anticipated, we finally returned in person to hold more and more exciting Reading Celebrations again in some of our schools, energizing adults and kiddos alike!

A few of our popular read-alouds included *Parker Looks Up*, written by Jessica and Parker Curry, which tells the story behind a powerful image of a young Black girl looking up at a portrait of First Lady Michelle Obama; *Dog vs. Cat* by Chris Gall, which spurred great conversation and debate among young readers over their favorite animals; and

Everything Awesome About Space and Other Galactic Facts by Mike Lowery, which was paired with a challenging moon mission activity that required students to think critically about which supplies they would need to pack for survival in space, and problem-solve different obstacles they might face.

In the 2021-22 program year, Books for Keeps:

- Served nearly **80 different sites** in Pittsburgh and Wilkinsburg.
- Provided nearly **33,000 books** to more than **10,000 children** in early childhood centers, schools, and after-school programs in struggling neighborhoods.
- Provided an additional **7,650 books** to children at community events, including the PPS back-to-school event at Acrisure Stadium.

“ We really, really appreciate the diversity displayed in the books because one of our current goals is to increase the diversity in our books and toys in the classroom. Thank you sooo much!”



STORYMOBILE

Due to the pandemic, our Storymobile program has functioned similarly to Book for Keeps. Rather than kids joining us aboard the Storymobile truck parked outside their schools or homes, we have continued to bring the magic of storytime to life directly from inside their classrooms at partner sites that have welcomed us back in person!

During biweekly visits this past year, kiddos excitedly sang along with us to fun seasonal tunes, such as “Old MacDonald Walked Through the Leaves,” learning sign language for different colors and identifying animals to help build vocabulary; memorized dance moves to different beats on each page of *I Got the Rhythm* by Connie Schofield-Morrison, while gaining musical knowledge; marveled at the universe with Rocket in *Rocket Says Look Up!* by Nathan Bryon; and tried to guess where Pigeon was hiding on the number chart after reading *The Pigeon HAS to Go to School!* by Mo Willems. Afterward, their faces lit up with sheer delight every time they got to self-select the perfect book suited for their unique interests to take home – and KEEP! In lieu of lending books and materials like in the past, Storymobile sites received book giveaways once a month.

For all of our early childhood centers, we have continued to deliver monthly storytime kits that include books and complementary activities, resources that stock classroom libraries and provide teachers with pre-made learning materials they can readily utilize as enrichment for kids – and *keep* for future use! The best news of all is that this summer, our Storymobiles finally hit the streets again for biweekly community time stops, and the kiddos and RIF staff couldn’t have been happier!

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 more than **2,000 library books** in our storytime kits, helping to build robust libraries for children to read books in their classrooms every day.
- Provided more than **21,000 books** for RIF kids to take home and keep, fueling their desire to read more and continuing to build home libraries.

“We love the variety of the kits and how they hit on lots of topics that we tend to focus on during other activities like colors, shapes, numbers, letters, emotions, etc. We also just 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.”

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Building literacy does not happen overnight. This gradual process relies heavily on access to resources that many families in our target population lack due to racial or other socioeconomic inequities. Our Book Babies program serves as an access point, providing early literacy intervention that helps set children up for success.

During weekly Book Babies sessions, we not only target little ones with fun storytimes, but we also offer valuable tools, tips, and modeling of reading strategies for parents, whose involvement can truly make all the difference in all of their children's literacy development, helping to create more literate, self-empowered communities. These sessions provide much-needed support to more and more families who tune in with their little ones to read, talk, sing and play every week.

Over the past year, Book Babies has expanded as we've continued to hold virtual storytimes on Facebook Live twice a week. The virtual platform has greatly helped increase accessibility, allowing more families and their little ones to tune in live, or watch the recordings later at their convenience – as many times as they wish!

We have also continued to deliver monthly Book Babies bags, filled with books, literacy activities, crafts and educational toys, directly to families' homes throughout the program year. We continue to communicate regularly with families by texting encouraging messages and tips for building literacy skills at home. This summer, we also began our in-person, weekly Book Babies programming on the Storymobile and plan to continue both virtual and in-person sessions this fall, offering families the best of both worlds!

In the 2020-21 program year, our Book Babies program:

- Delivered more than **3,300 monthly resource bags**, including more than **6,500 brand-new books** as well as literacy activities, crafts and educational toys directly to families' homes.
- Served **60 enrolled families** in East Liberty, Hazelwood, the Hill District, Northside, Southside and Wilkinsburg, in addition to those served by partner sites.
- Provided **nearly 500 more books** to family members of any age through special requests and catalogue orders, which they could place at any time.



"Your consistency and kindness was such a crucial part to making it through the hardest parts of the pandemic. I feel so privileged our kids were still given an opportunity to have new books to read and love."

LITERACY MENTORING

Our literacy mentoring programs, corporate-based RIF Readers and school-based Everybody Wins! (EW), pair young students with corporate volunteers and adults in the community, respectively, to help kids grow into proficient readers. During weekly mentoring sessions, reading buddies develop close bonds as they get to know each other better, read stories together, and complete learning activities geared toward each child's ability level and personal interests.

Following the success of our virtual mentoring pilot, reading buddies continued to meet virtually over Zoom during the 2021-2022 school year to read new stories together from an online library, work through fun, brain-boosting activities (e.g. word searches, crack-the-code puzzles, story-building sheets, drawing prompts, etc.), and as always, build strong relationships that helped our RIF kids keep growing as readers, and future leaders. In January, we paired a whole new class of reading buddies with mentors from UPMC, expanding the opportunity to even more students!

According to one mentor, the experience was equally rewarding for them: "The relationships between mentors and mentees were as strong as ever, even over Zoom. It was great fun seeing my Reading Buddy every week, and getting to share books online together! There was a real sense of community among everyone involved."

We look forward to incorporating both virtual and in-person programming in the fall as we pair even more young students with mentors who can help to nurture their self-confidence and reading skills.

In the 2020-21 program year:

- Our literacy mentors helped support **44 young students** in our virtual mentoring program as they continued to meet with their paired mentors once a week.
- Kids in our literacy mentoring program received **more than 500 books** to keep, adding even more books to their RIF home libraries!

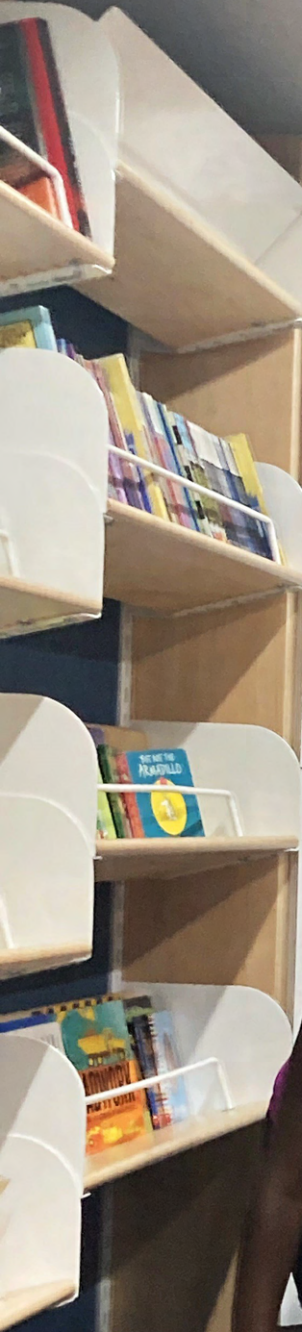
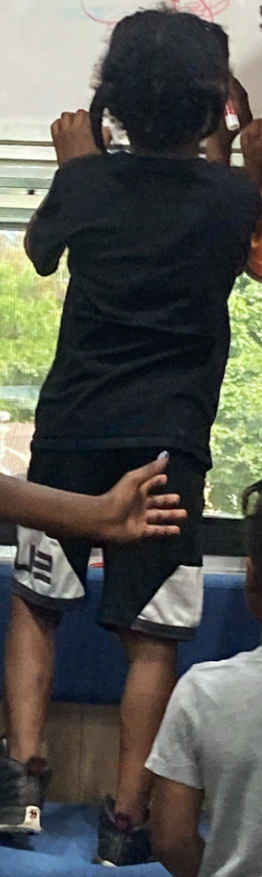
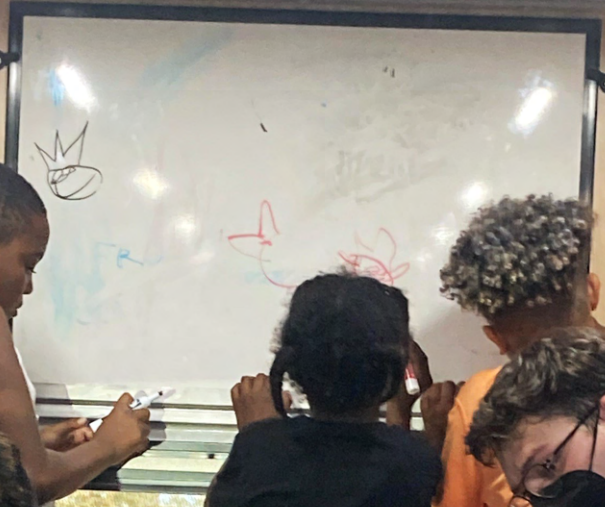


2021—2022

"The kids are wonderful which helps a lot and glad I have been given the opportunity to be a part of a GREAT program."



High guys
Today
will be
Calm Cool
and collected
don't let feble
Noise burst
Today that
are a
Goal
Today



INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Listing includes individuals and organizations who donated between 6/1/21- 5/31/22

Library Level (\$5,000+)

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Challinor
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Virginia J. Thornburgh
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Mary Walton
Michael and Kristin Wessell
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Novel Level (\$100 - \$249)

Anonymous (4)
Jean Alexander
David T Aloe
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Claire Ashkin
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Amy Bayer
Chelsey Bean
Sydna Beasley Burns
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"I wanted to thank you for your support and book donation this summer. The weekly new books and interaction was amazing. Our children read a total of 833 books!"

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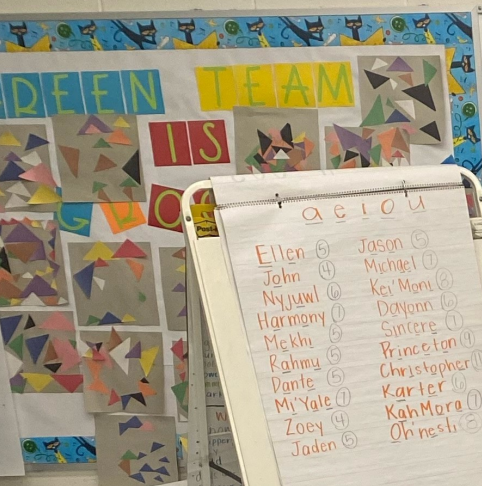
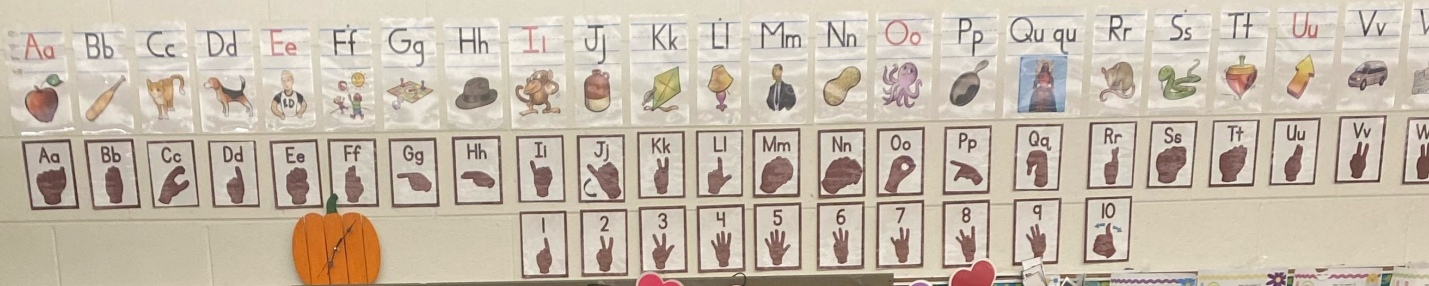
Marilyn S. Latterman
Caroline Lehman
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Dick and Thea Stover
Sara Talarico
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Christopher Winters
Alice Yochum
Donna Yohe

"Thank you so much for the awesome books and great titles! I am super excited for our students to receive a great book at the culmination of the PPS Literacy Week Celebration. Thank you so much!!"



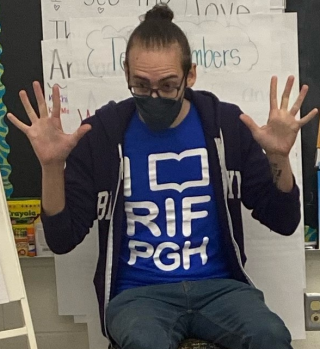
a e i o u

Ellen (6)	Jason (5)
John (4)	Michael (7)
Nyjuwl (6)	Kei Moni (8)
Harmony (7)	Dayann (6)
Mekhu (5)	Sincere (1)
Rahmy (5)	Princeton (1)
Dante (5)	Christopher (1)
Mi'Yale (7)	Kar ter (4)
Zoey (4)	Kah Mora (1)
Jaden (5)	Oh nesti (5)

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it	go	look	can	like
play	my	for	see	me
she	on	with	little	



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Rossin Foundation
Rubinoff-Dunham Family Fund
Ryan Memorial Foundation
James M. and Lucy K. Schoonmaker Foundation
Sisters of Divine Providence
Snee-Reinhardt Charitable Foundation
Sylvia and Martin Snow Family Fund
Mendel and Sylvia Solomon Charitable Trust
The Leigh Tison Charitable Trust
TriState Capital Bank
United Way Of Southwestern PA
UPMC
UPMC Health Plan
Shannon Wilson Charitable Fund

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

A+ Schools
Allegheny County Early Literacy Team
Allegheny County Library Association
Allies for Children
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh
The Boys and Girls Club
Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
Center of Life
Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh
Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
Citiparks
Department of Human Services
The Education Partnership

Greater Hazelwood Initiative
Greater Hazelwood Community Collaborative
Greater Pittsburgh Festival of Books
Hazelwood Early Learning Network and Hub
Hill District Early Literacy Initiative
Hill District Education Council
Hilltop Family Care Connections
The Homeless Children's Education Fund
Homewood Children's Village and the Homewood Early Learning Network
Hosanna House Inc.

Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh
Kappa Kappa Gamma
KEYS Service Corps
The Latino Community Center
Literacy Pittsburgh
Macedonia FACE
Making a Greater Hazelwood
Manchester Academy Charter School
The Mentoring Partnership
One Northside
Open Literacy
Pittsburgh Learning Collaborative (PLC)
The Pittsburgh Promise
Pittsburgh Public Schools

The P. R. I. D. E. Program
Propel Charter Schools
Reading Is Fundamental
Reading Ready Pittsburgh
Remake Learning Network
Saturday Light Brigade
Sojourner Mom's Teen ELECT
Trying Together
The University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development
Uptown Partners of Pittsburgh
Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh
Wilkinsburg School District
YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh
Youth Enrichment Association

RIF Reader Volunteers...

Alexandria Allen
Ari Altschuler
Michael Anastas
Joyleene Baldonieri
Angela Balistrieri
Joanne Beckman
Peter Belcastro
Jill Bejger-Frederick
Jordan Blask
Danielle Boyd
Ashton Brown
Sylvia Brown

LaVerne Carter
Luci Carter
John Cheng
Jodi Davenport
Jessica Dewit
Alicia DiPaolo
Elise Dorsey
Lisa Elliott
Sydney Fisch
Stacy Graham
Lauren Huchko
Rachel Hugo
Sean Jackson

Monica Joyner
Thomas Kang
Jennifer Kennedy
Florri Ladov
Julie Lechliter
JoEllen Leech
Amy Lewis
Katelyn McGuiere
Ashley Modany
Lynn Monahan
Laurin Moore
Christa Nicholson
Stacey Norrington

Kelly Parker
Meghna Parthasarathy
Chandni Patel
Maria Pisano
Brandy Slatinsky
Jovanna Silipigni
Wendy Stultz
Rose Waddell
Alec Walker
Helen Wigger
Jordon Williams
Ruth Woods

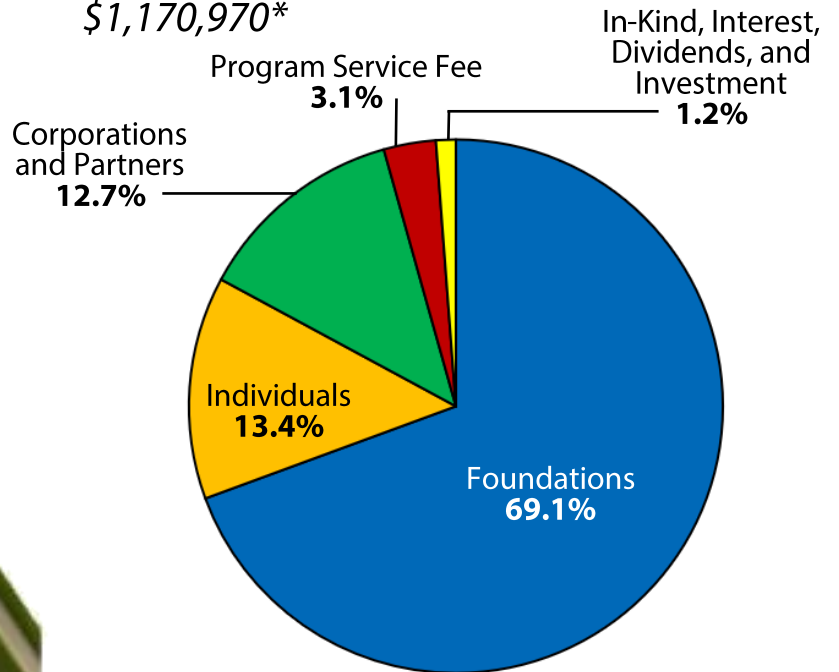
"Our rising middle school students have been clamoring for new graphic novels and books and loved this selection!"



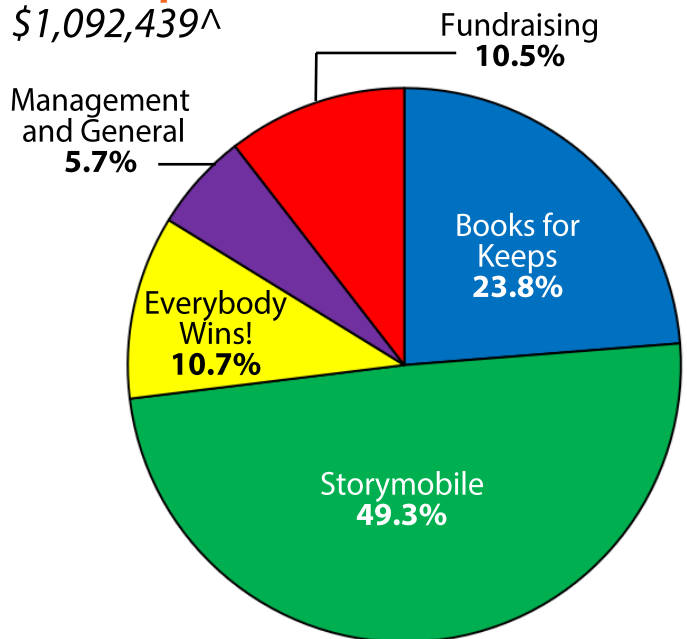
FINANCIALS

Total Revenue:
\$1,170,970

Adjusted Revenue:
\$1,170,970*



Total Expenses:
\$1,092,439^

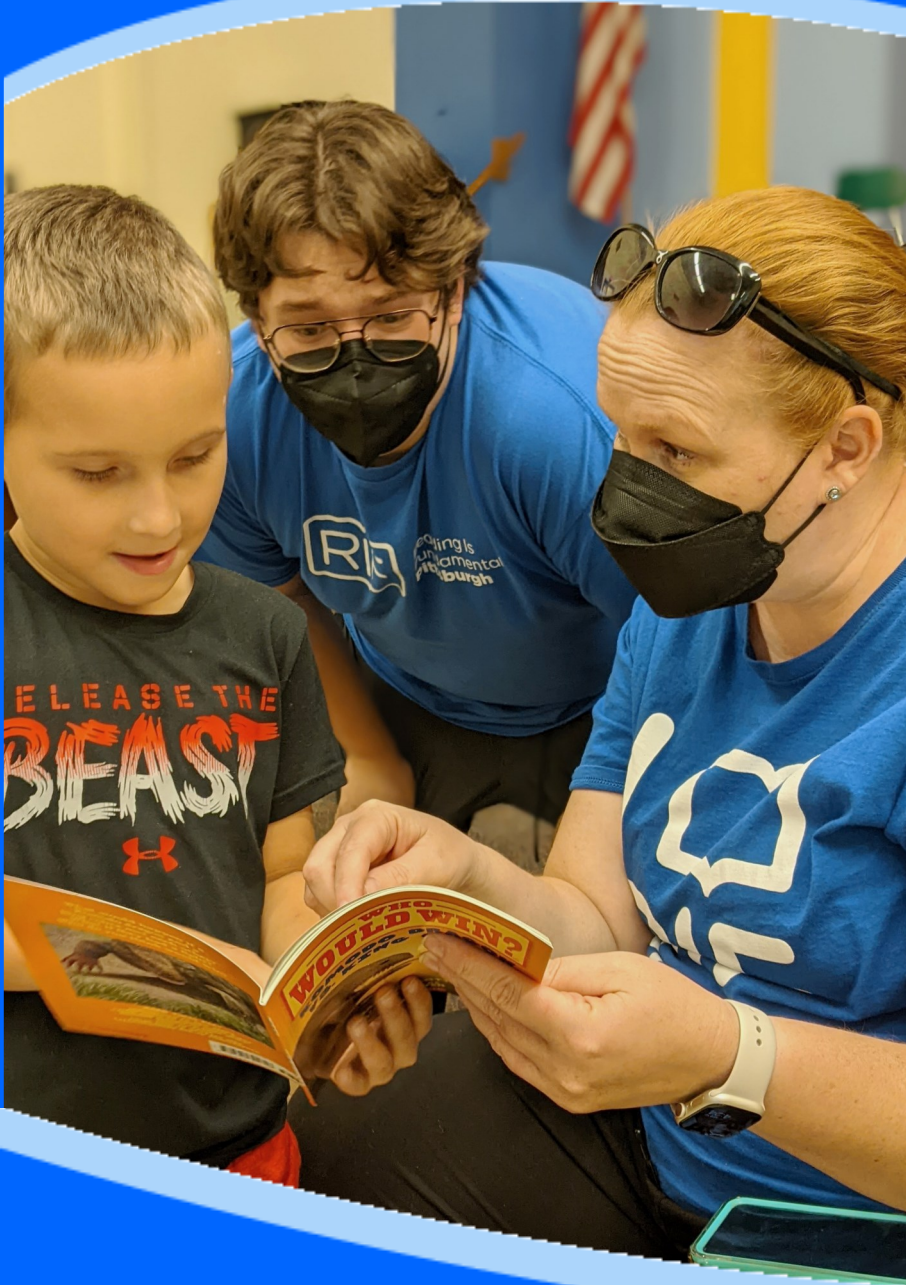


*Less future portions of multi-year grants plus cash receipts from prior multi-year grants

^Less depreciation

"I wish school was like the Storymobile!"

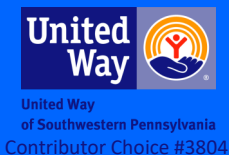
Be a RIF Pittsburgh Book Hero!



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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