

words a!ive

ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

At Words Alive, we believe that a more literate community better serves us all, and that everyone has something to give and to gain in the movement to make reading matter. As a believer in the power of reading – the power to transform your life and to create lasting opportunities for success – you understand the role community plays in ensuring that that power is a reality for everyone.

This year more than any other, that collaborative spirit remains at the core of what we do, and the power of partnership has enabled us to expand where, when, and with whom we are able to deliver meaningful programming. Examples include growing partnerships with agencies such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove, the Neighborhood House Association, and Momentum Learning, as well as art leaders such as the Chuck Jones Center for Creativity and the New Children's Museum. We collaborate and value partnership with our community because we

know that coordinated efforts can reach a broader audience, share the risk involved in experimentation, and accomplish more than any single organization can do alone.

Still, at the heart of our mission lies a single focus – to turn people into readers. We want children, youth, and parents believe in the power of reading, and love what readings means in their lives. To get there, our programs aim to help participants build a regular reading practice; to foster interest in, positive attitudes about, and motivation towards reading; and to grow the skill sets needed to connect deeply with what we read. To achieve this, it is imperative that we continue investing in the evaluation of our programs and strategically leverage our work with partners to have impact at scale.

In the stories of impact and collaboration that follow, we hope that you too are inspired by both the joy of a connection to reading, and the growing momentum we are building together as a community who reads. Everyone has a part to play in making this community stronger, and we are grateful for your support in making reading matter. Here's to writing the next chapter together,

Executive Director,
Words Alive

words a!ive team

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YEAR AT A GLANCE

"The most valuable thing I learned is that reading is in everything we do."

-Parent participant, Family Literacy Program

30

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS

18

AUTHOR EVENTS

5,287

STUDENTS & PARENTS
SERVED

27,254

BOOKS DONATED

1

PUBLICATION

4,598

LITERACY PROGRAM
SESSIONS

536

ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

1

AWARD

1

EXHIBIT OF STUDENT
WORK

PROGRAM IMPACT: FAMILY LITERACY

Research shows that child brain development is driven by experiences and relationships, and that the brain architecture for future learning is laid during the early years of life. That's why our Family Literacy Program focuses on empowering parents with the confidence, techniques, and materials that lead to deepened reading engagement with their children.



REPORTING OUT

After participating in the program, parents reported that they were reading more with their children, had learned how to incorporate reading together into their daily lives, had a stronger understanding of child development concepts, and felt more empowered to support their children's education. By program's end:

- 82% *more* families than before the program reported having a routine for looking at books together at home
- Children demonstrated an average 14% gain in pre-literacy skills, according to the Get Ready to Read! screening tool
- Families reported an average 39% increase in the size of their home libraries, growing on average from 14 to 19 books
- 100% of participating adults said they would recommend the program to other families

** Please visit our website for the full Family Literacy Program outcomes report.*





LOOKING FORWARD

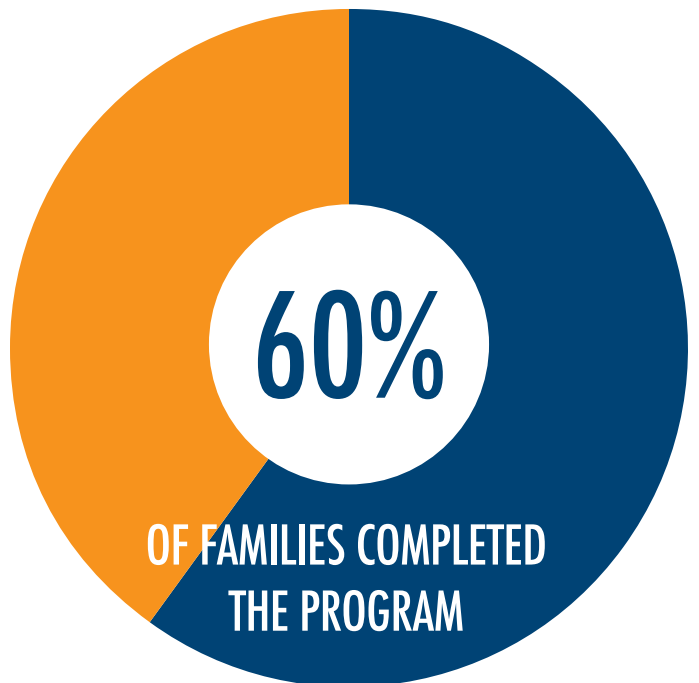
Strategic partnerships enabled us to reach 268% more families in 2016–17 than the previous year, and to introduce new elements to a families’ experience in the program. By training partners at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove to implement our program as part of a joint grant, we reached audiences in Orange County for the first time ever. And by teaming up with Neighborhood House Association – Head Start here in San Diego, an untapped population of families developed habits of book exploration at home.

Next, we will be teaming up with Fullerton School District, training social service staff to implement our Family Literacy Program as part of district goals to increase parent engagement and create positive learning environments.

During the 2016-17 program year, 663 families came through the door, taking home 4,142 books and clocking 4,809 hours of shared learning time.



This year, the New Children’s Museum named Words Alive a pARTner in Creativity, connecting families participating in our Family Literacy Program with a free visit to the museum – many for the first time. Museum and Words Alive staff worked together to plan a special day of art projects in the museum’s education center and exploration of current installations. The event was a perfect extension of our programmatic themes — honoring the power of play and finding ways to make learning more playful.



PROGRAM IMPACT: READ ALOUD

Research shows that children from under-served communities often lack the reading experiences critical to their early literacy development. That's why volunteers in our Read Aloud Program lead weekly sessions that help preschool through 3rd grade students connect with the joy of reading while developing cognitive and verbal skills.

Looking to enhance the literacy component of their after-school program, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove plugged our Read Aloud small-group model into weekly activities. Here, staff and students enjoy a spirited moment during small-group discussion.



TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

"The program has been amazing. My students are so engaged during the read aloud and eager to ask questions that I often wonder if it's the same class. They love to hear our volunteer read to them." —Teacher, Read Aloud Program

REPORTING OUT

- 3,495 students served across 37 sites
- 2,496 hours spent reading aloud
- 6,990 new books gifted to home libraries

Following a curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards, volunteers continue to facilitate our whole-group and small-group read aloud models in 141 classrooms across San Diego. This year, we explored program delivery in an after-school setting through a growing partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove, providing professional development to staff and deeper read aloud experiences for the children they serve.

"Each week gets better and the success of the program has spilled over into our regular programming in such a meaningful way. This training has helped our staff grow and develop our read aloud skills. We are becoming more thoughtful and purposeful with our regular scheduled daily circle time throughout the rest of the week, and the children have responded incredibly by being more attentive and engaged... We could not be more grateful for this experience!"

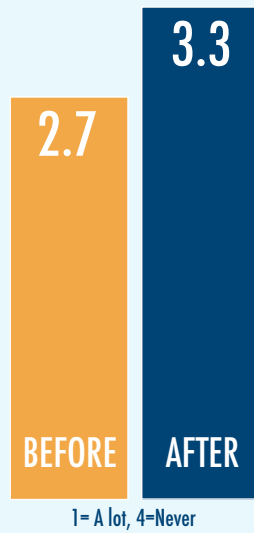
—Staff, Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove

Students perception of themselves change significantly after becoming book owners and readers.

Before and after comparison of student feelings of happiness when given a book as a present



Before and after comparison of student feelings of worry about others' opinions of their reading



* Visit our website after November 15th for a full report of findings from the Read Aloud Program small-group model.

(Right) Kindergarten student Dalia explores a piece of coral, like the one pictured in the book she took home as part of the program's twice-annual book giveaway.

LOOKING FORWARD

In fall 2017–18, we will continue program delivery in after-school settings with our new partner, B.A.S.E. in Oceanside, expanding our reach both in North County and in grade levels by including 4th and 5th grade students. In its third and final year, our project to evaluate the Read Aloud Program with the Caster Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research will also focus on measuring program impact with partners in Oceanside.



“The variety of books read each visit allows for different genres and topics that extend beyond our units. The variety builds a love of reading of all types of literature and adds a richness to the literacy experience in our class.” —Teacher, Read Aloud Program

PROGRAM IMPACT: ADOLESCENT BOOK GROUP

Research shows that nearly a third of youth from low-income communities fail to earn a high-school diploma. That's why volunteers in our Adolescent Book Group Program work to engage at-risk teens in the power of reading through integrated book-club style discussions, writing sessions, and project-based learning support that builds language, reading fluency, and critical thinking skills.

“The best part about the project was the open-minded collaboration between two passionate organizations working toward greater well-being for all youth. Literacy and art are a perfect fit. Works created by students were thought-out, compelling, and deeply moving. There was a clear sense of greater understanding to their own presence.”

**–Denise Dion-Scoyni, Teaching Artist,
Chuck Jones Center for Creativity**

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

“This project made me fall in love with teaching all over again. It was so fun seeing these students get so passionate about making their stories and seeing their excitement when watching the videos.” –Teacher, Adolescent Book Group

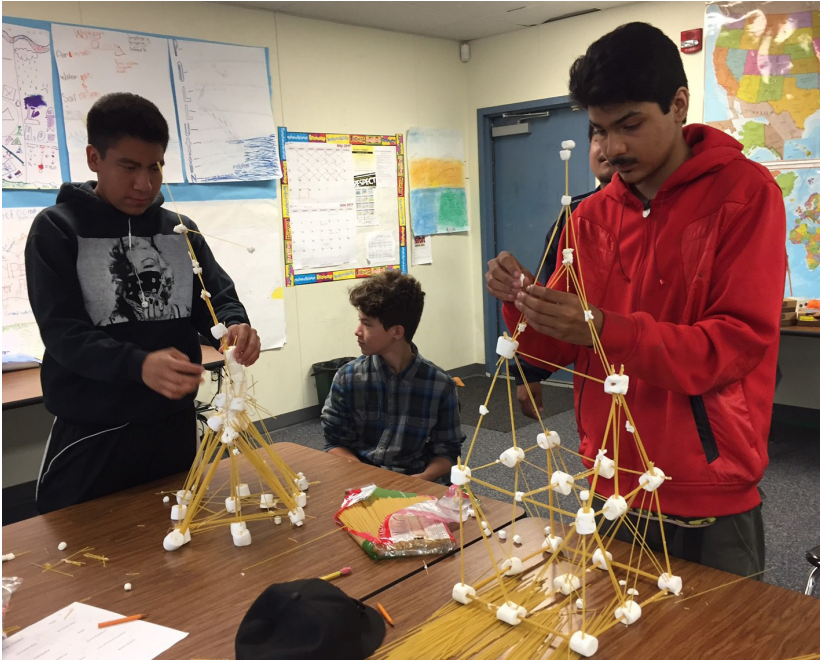
REPORTING OUT

Over the course of the year, Words Alive and volunteer facilitators focused on the needs of students and teachers in 17 classrooms by providing project-based learning support, leading discussions on texts that related to classroom project themes, and helping students research and prepare for exhibitions. The result was an explicit connection between what students read and how they applied that content across subjects.

ARTS COMPONENT

Inspired by the novels *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates and *Letters to a Young Artist* by Anna Deavere Smith, students worked with Words Alive and artists from the Chuck Jones Center for Creativity to explore the theme of “presence” — writing letters of reflection, creating story boards and shooting their own short stop-motion animation films. In June, finished films were showcased alongside famous works at the iconic Chuck Jones Gallery in downtown San Diego.





LOOKING FORWARD

Based on the success of project-based learning support in 2016–17, our program is expanding to weekly and bi-weekly sessions, deepening rapport between students and volunteers – a key benefit of the program as identified by participating students – and providing a more cohesive educational experience for students as they think critically about particular subject matter.

(Left) After reading Problem Solving 101 by Ken Watanabe, students discussed finding root causes of a problem and mapping out possible solutions, then enriched those themes in a fun way by constructing towers out of spaghetti and marshmallows.

Connecting students to the authors they read is a key method in broadening students' world views. Here, bestselling author Kwame Alexander, along with moderator Marika Jeffrey, San Diego Public Library Youth Services Librarian and Words Alive volunteer, speaks to students about Alexander's work The Crossover, his writing process, and activism.



PROGRAM IMPACT: WESTREICH SCHOLARSHIP

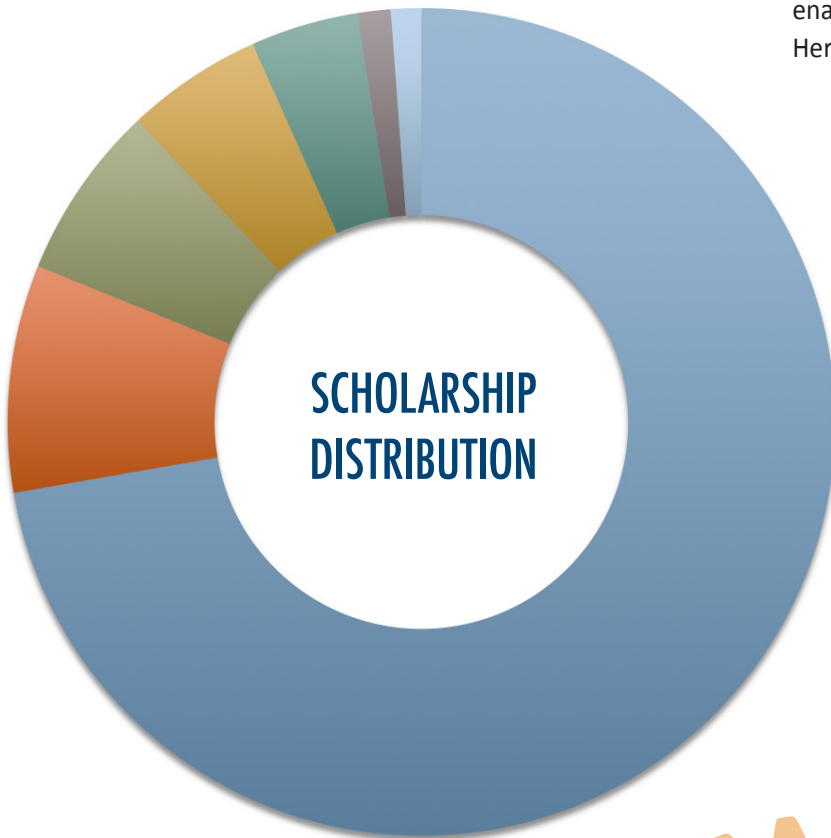
Research shows that students are best poised for success in higher education when they have access to opportunities for whole person development. That's why recipients of the Words Alive Westreich Scholarship receive financial, mentor, and resource-referral support as they pursue their higher education goals.

REPORTING OUT

This year, to launch or continue their educational path, 11 young adults received 304 hours of volunteer support and scholarships totaling \$36,000.

WHAT SETS US APART

At Words Alive, mentor support includes helping scholarship recipients budget their awarded funds. The flexibility to use their scholarship to cover the cost of basic needs also enables students to stay focused on school and their future. Here's how students spent their scholarships in 2016–17:



- Rent & Utilities 72%
- Food 9%
- School Supplies & Books 7%
- Tuition 5%
- Other 4%
- Toiletries 1%
- Child Care & Supplies 1%

6

STUDENTS ATTENDING
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

3

STUDENTS
ATTENDING 4-YEAR
UNIVERSITIES

2

GRADUATES EARNING A
B.A. FROM 4-YEAR
UNIVERSITIES

SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE

Brittany Jackson, age 23 and a five-year scholarship recipient, graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz with a B.A. in Sociology. Brittany benefited from a close relationship with her mentor, Sarah Archibald, and next plans to pursue an M.A. towards her career goal of becoming a high school counselor.

"My experience with Words Alive has affected me by showing the support that I lacked at home, both emotional and financial. I am grateful for Sarah — she is very supportive and understanding of all the obstacles I encountered while I was in school. Words Alive has demonstrated that there are people who care for others without expecting something in return. They have been so loving to me, and my experience at UCSC wouldn't have been the same without them." –Brittany Jackson

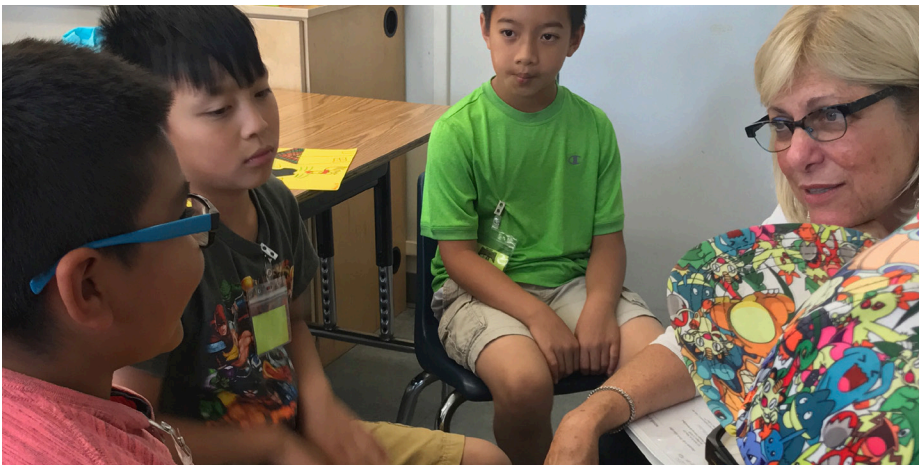


COMMUNITY & PARTNERS

SPECIAL PROJECTS



Building home libraries is a critical part of inspiring a commitment to reading and ensuring that families love what reading means in their lives. In June, we hosted a massive book giveaway at Golden Hill Elementary made possible by our partnership with the Harry Potter Alliance, which chose Words Alive as the recipient of its annual Accio Books campaign — an international book drive and literacy advocacy effort. Every student at Golden Hill and their families were invited to take home 10 books to read over summer, adding 6,000+ books to home



To help combat the summer slide, we returned as a collaborating partner for the United Way City Heights Partnership for Children's Readers in the Heights Program. In its second year, the program grew from public housing complexes to elementary school campuses, serving more than 400 children from kindergarten through 3rd grade. Words Alive trained a cohort of 30 new volunteers and interns, sharing techniques in modeling curiosity and wonder when exploring texts, as well as methods of group engagement to ensure every child's participation in the experience.

GREATER IMPACT TOGETHER

Our greatest impact comes as part of coordinated efforts in the community, and we are proud to call the following partners during the 2016–17 program year:

- Armed Services YMCA
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove
- Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego
- Christopher Weil and Co.
- Chuck Jones Center for Creativity
- Diamond Education Excellence Partnership
- Escondido Union School District
- Harry Potter Alliance
- Linda Vista Kindergarten Readiness Network
- Live Well San Diego
- Neighborhood House Association
- New Children's Museum
- Oceanside Promise
- Office of City Councilwoman Lorie Zapf
- Quality Preschool Initiative
- San Diego City College
- San Diego Council on Literacy
- San Diego County Office of Education
- San Diego District Attorney's Office
- San Diego Mentor Coalition
- San Diego Public Library
- San Diego State University
- San Diego Social Venture Partners
- San Diego Unified School District
- Special Libraries Association – San Diego Chapter
- United Way City Heights Partnership for Children
- Vista Hill – Incredible Families
- Volunteer Administrator's Network
- Warwick's
- YMCA Childcare Resource Service

MILESTONES

This year marked the end of a special three-year partnership with the San Diego Social Venture Partners. Through their investment and expertise, we were able to strengthen our infrastructure and organizational foundation, develop a keen market awareness of our programs and value, and identify strategic planning practices that will not only pave the way for our programmatic future, but provide opportunities for board and leadership development.



Mark Dillion and Sandra Timmons accept the Volunteer Partner of the Year award on behalf of the SVP team at our annual volunteer appreciation event.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF READERS



Best-selling author Jodi Picoult, along with moderator Lacy Crawford, presented insights from Picoult's latest novel *Small Great Things* to a sold-out crowd of 600+ supporters at our 13th Annual Author's Luncheon.



Our annual Share Your Love of Reading Campaign featured 10 local celebrities and elected officials as guest readers in the classroom. Supporters, including the San Diego Gulls, joined the campaign on social media, posting *#shelfies* of themselves with their favorite books!

AWARDS



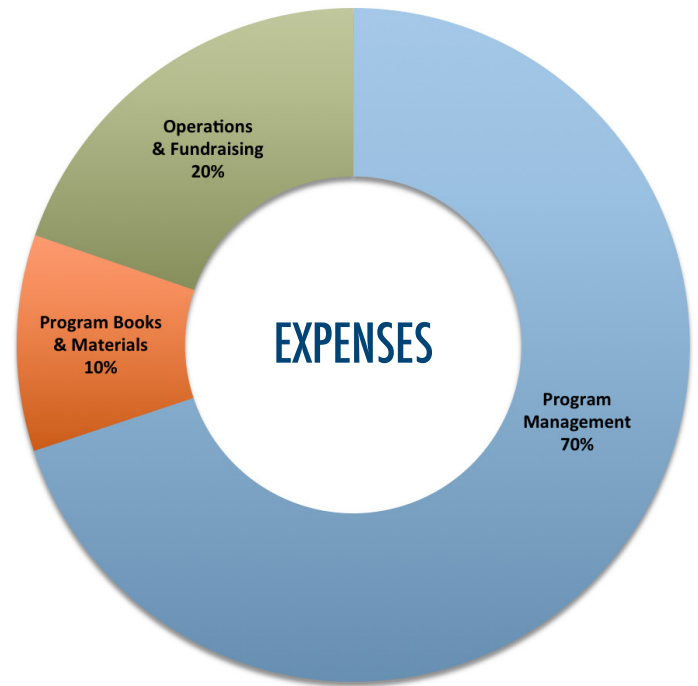
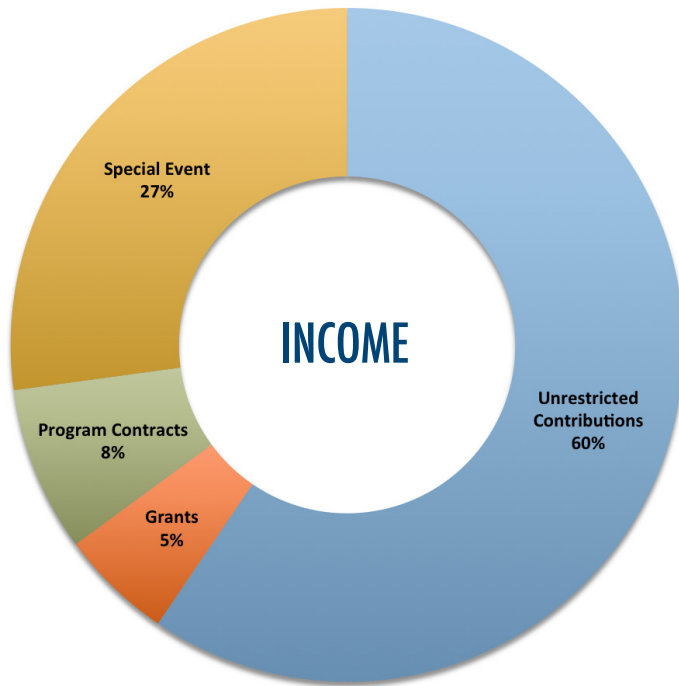
Volunteers Karen Malin and Rick Seidenwurm were both recognized by Councilwoman Lorie Zapf at the Council District Two Volunteer Appreciation and Recognition Breakfast for their outstanding service to schools in the area.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE FIELD

- Past Director of Operations Chrissy Green Califf co-presented a session on the power of collaboration and project-based learning in alternative education settings at the annual conference for Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School Administrators of California.
- Words Alive published an article highlighting the impact of our Adolescent Book Group program in the spring volume of the Journal of Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School Administrators of California.

FISCAL INTEGRITY

WORDS ALIVE PROFIT AND LOSS JULY 2016–JUNE 2017



Words Alive volunteers donated 16,132 hours of service during the 2016–17 Program Year, a value of \$445,081.88!

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Unrestricted Contributions	\$450,003.88	Program Management	\$552,506.34
Grants	\$41,000.00	Program Books & Materials	\$82,100.96
Program Contracts	\$59,947.39	Operations & Fundraising	\$155,820.22
Special Events	\$205,337.68	Total Expenses	\$790,427.52
Total Income	\$756,288.95		
		NET INCOME	
			-\$34,138.57

* Please refer to our website for full audited financial statements as they become available.

OUR SUPPORTERS

We are grateful to the 650+ supporters who make our work possible, including the following who have contributed to our Read for Life Campaign, or who gave \$1,500+ during the 2016–17 program year.

Leadership Circle (\$10,000+ for 3 years)

Lynne Carlson
Christensen Family Foundation
Craft DeMeules Family Fund
Fischer Family Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation
Kimberly & Jeffrey Goldman
Kay & Bill Gurtin
Vivien & Jeffrey Ressler
Karen & Jeffrey Silberman
The Westreich Foundation
William Gumpert Foundation

Readers Circle (\$5,000+ for 3 years)

Camille Cicinelli
Toby Eisenberg
Cynthia & Aaron Shenkman

Impact Circle (\$1,000+ for 3 years)

Karen & Warren Kessler
Leslye & Scott Lyons
Jennifer O'Brien
The Pidgeon Family

Institutional Partners (\$1,500+)

City of San Diego
First Unitarian Universalist Church

Foundation Partners (\$1,500+)

Better World Trust
Cushman Foundation
Daphne Seybolt Culpeper Memorial Foundation
Dr. Seuss Fund at the San Diego Foundation
Hal and Debby Jacobs Family Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation
La Jolla Kiwanis Foundation
The Mudd Charitable Foundation
Nordson Corporation Foundation
The Patricia & Christopher Weil Family Foundation
Rice Family Foundation
The Samuel I. & John Henry Fox Foundation
Samuel & Katherine French Fund
San Diego Social Venture Partners
Schoenith Foundation
U.S. Bank Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation
The Westreich Foundation

Program Partners (\$1,500+)

Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove
Neighborhood House Association
San Diego County Office of Education

Corporate Partners (\$1,500+)

Christopher Weil & Co.
Geppetto's
Gurtin Municipal Bond Management
First Republic Bank
Lyons Accountancy Group
Out of Print

San Diego Gas & Electric
University of San Diego

Individual Donors (\$1,500+)

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Tina Thomas
Heidi Weisbaum

DONOR PERSPECTIVES

"I give to Words Alive because it is an incredible organization which has so impactfully affected everyone – the children, the staff, the volunteers and the community. Words Alive makes the community a better place."

–Toby Eisenberg, past volunteer, founding board member, and supporter since 1999

Literacy is the foundation of
community and economic
development. When everyone can
read, whole communities thrive.

Join our movement to make
reading matter.

INVEST

VOLUNTEER

CHAMPION

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www.wordsalive.org

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