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## ***NYer Of The Week: Maureen Rover Hopes Her Reading Team Helps Students' School Performance***

By: John Schiumo



*Alarmed by the test scores among some of the city's youngest students, this week's New Yorker is helping children beat their struggles in school through early reading programs. NY1's John Schiumo filed the following report.*

For many children, learning to read is not as easy as ABC. It was a skill that came quite easily to Maureen Rover.

"Reading is part of my life's blood. I have always been a reader from the time I was a young child," she says. "We played letter and word games in the car, and I can't imagine a life without books, without the ability to read."

After a successful career in educational publishing, Rover decided she needed to share her life with books with others.

"I had taken an interest in how children learn to read and what stood in the way of literacy success for so many children," she says.

So in 2001, she started the Reading Team, a nonprofit in Harlem that introduces literacy skills to preschool children by working with day care centers and Head Start programs.

"Many of our families are working two and sometimes three jobs," Rover says. "So there's not a lot of family time."

"For them to have a program that's tailored to each child, so that it changes and it grows as they learn more, we can't do that," says Diane Spann of Addie Mae Collins Community Service.

The team of trained literacy educators teach the children everything from which way to hold a book to alphabet songs to computer puzzles. Judging from the atmosphere, it seems to be working.

"The difference you can see in a few months, the confidence levels that you see in the children, the excitement when the light goes off and they're starting to make the connections, the literacy connections," says Tracey Wiggins, a literacy educator with the reading team.

"I'm learning about letters and the alphabet, and reading books," says Madison, a 4-year-old reading team student.

"I want to be very smart for my mommy," says Ann Marie, a 4-year-old reading team student. "My favorite book is the monkey. The monkey swings and swings from side to side, and then he gets some bananas.

So, for giving these young New Yorkers the gift of reading, Maureen Rover is our New Yorker of the Week.