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!

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).

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

“The relationships built between mentor and student were amazing.”

“I wanted to reach out to let you know that our Reading Celebrations are fantastic. The RIF team members are wonderful. There has bee 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!”
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 *Got the Rhythm* by Connie Schofield-Morrison, while gaining musical knowledge; marveled at the universe with *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.”
INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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

Library Level
($5,000+)

Perry Coloso
Charles L. Cost—Cost Company
Chris Johns
Mary McDonough
Francis S. Solano Jr. M.D. and Lenette Solano

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

Anonymous (2)
Russell and Katherine Ayres
Ritchie Battle
Melissa B. Dodge and Mark W. Rutherford
The J. Christopher Donahue and Ann C. Donahue Charitable Fund
Cary Blanchett and Denise Dufour
Brian Feingold
Kathy and Michael Fine
Timothy Fisher
Chris and Dawn Fleischner
Nicholas and Cheryl Galizia
Elliott Gill
Bryan and Janine Iams
Mike and Doris Kauffelt
Karen J. Maresch
Jim Mesloh
Morby Family Charitable Foundation, Inc.
Mark and Suzanne Morrison
June and David Nimick
Vincent and Natasha O’Sullivan
James E. Taylor, Ph.D.
Alan and Karen Waggoner

Leonard Silk
J.L.H. Simonds
Joseph Smierciak
Francis Soen
James C. Stalder
Lori Stiefel
Hayes and Patricia Stover
Matthew Teplitz and Sue Challinor
Louis Testoni
Virginia J. Thornburgh
Sybil P. Veeder
Sandra M. Volpe
Mary Walton
Michael and Kristin Wessell
Julie Wiles

Novel Level
($100 - $249)

Anonymous (4)
Jean Alexander
David T. Aloe
Laura and George Arnold
Claire Ashkin
Joseph Balaban
Amy Bayer
Chelsey Bean
Sydna Beasley Burns
Joanne Beckman
Amy Bihrle Ogren
Angel and Maria Bilbao
Amada Blount
Bernadette Brenkus
Alice Bright
Jennifer Brodt
Lois Diamond Bronn
Scott and Joyce Cessar
Valerie Cooper
Michele Rone Cooper
William Coppula
Patricia and Richard Coyle
James and Elizabeth Cunningham
Steven Edelstein
Jeff and Sharon Evans
Lucio and Frauke Facchini
Margaret Findle
James Frantz
Dennis Friend
Frank Fuhrer

Robert C. Gallo
Melinda and Frederick Geiger
John and Anne Gentry
William D. and Margaret S. Ghrist
Josie and Geoff Gibson
Rich and Debbie Goldman
Cindy Goodman-Leib
Dr. Charles B. Greenberg and Susan L. Greenberg
Adam Grine
Tim Hennessy
Thelma and Andy Herlich
Susan Hershenson
Edgar J. Holtz
Kenneth and Joan Horroho
Linda and Ralph Juhascik
Donald E. Jukes
Elizabeth Kampmeinert
Dr. Richard Kasdan
Jeffery A. Hritz and Ann D. Kelton
Jack and Ellen Kessler
The Stefi L. Kirschner and Gilbert Z. Schneider Philanthropic Fund of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh
Phyliss Kitzerow
Donna Knisly
Stephen E. Kohr
Andrea Labishak
John Lagnese
Virginia L. Lambeth
George Latulippe
William and Dianne Laughlin
Rebecca Lee
Bettsy and Tom Leib
Mark Leyenaar
James Lutton
Louise B. Lytle
Dewan Majid
Vicki March and Richard Steinman
Janet Markel
Pace Markowitz
Sarah L. McDaniel
Karl McDermott
Karen Merrick
Joseph and Gina Milcoff
Daniel Miller
Sheila Miller

“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!”
Chapter Book Level
($50 - $99)

Anonymous (7)
Patti and Sandy Berman
Drew Blasko
Nick Bolias
Eliott Callig
Ron Carmassi
Marilyn Carpenter
Randall W. and Cheryl A. Casciola
Chris Cerda
Wolfgang J. Choyke, PhD
Mark and Renee Christman
Laurence P. Comden
Carol and Gary Cozen
Pete Crespan
Gilbert DeBenedetti
Lisa Dennis
Mr. and Mrs. Scott DePoy
Joe and Helen DeStefano
Sarah Ditka
Stephen Docherty
Robert Drennan
Veronica M. Dristas
George B. Duffey
Courtney Durkin
Roslynn Fitzgerald
Ron and Lori Ann Gala
Robert J. Goetz
Richard and Dana Green
Scott and Michele Green
Robyn Gross
Marshall and Eleanor Hershberg
Chet and Brenda Karas
Kristen Keller
Carol Kinney
Monica Kolasa
Kenneth and Avis Kotovsky
Family Fund
Elaine Belle Krasik
Susan and Mario Lanna

Marilyn S. Latterman
Caroline Lehman
David Lyle
Patricia Martin
Kevin McGrath
David and Margaret McKeown
Linda Merriman
Jenny Michaux
Meredith Miller
Susan Miller-McGee
Josephine Moore
John and Sheila Mozer
Carol J. Mueller
Sylvia Owusu-Ansah
Walter Peterson
Phares Family Charitable Fund
Shannon Poliziani
Marirose and John Radelet
Molly Richter
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Sargert
Paul D. Scherrer
Esther Schreiber
Ed and Nancy Sheehan
John Shimkus
Paul and Mary Beth Sklar
Margaret Snively
Amy R. Spear
Judith Starr
Stuart M. Strickland
Marcia and Louis Swartz
Joy and Kevin Tomasic
Deborah Twardy
Ann and Ken Urish
Diane L. Weaver
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Westerberg
Helen Wigger
Keith Wolters
Dorothy F. Wriedt
Chuen Yee

Picture Level
(<$49)

Anonymous (5)
Mari Abbott
Karen Backus
Mike and Maureen Cerda
Judy Charlton
Julia Chatinover
Kameswararao Chikka
Don and Katie Ciccone
Meredith Colaiuzzi
Mr. and Mrs. Frederick H. Colen
Jackie Dempsey
Denise Denunzio
Joyce Diamondstone
Colleen C Filiak
Mimi Frey
Nick and Patty Galizia
James Gallagher
Melissa Galvin
Sandy Gans
Ward Garner
William W. Gordon II
Sandra Gould Ford
Jan Grice
Nancy T. Harris
Sarah Harris
Steve Irwin
Donna Isaac
Celeste and Bob Janosko
Mr. and Mrs. Jay Jarrell
The Ellen Teri Kaplan
Goldstein Donor Advised Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Pittsburgh
Rosanne and Clifford Levine
Mike and Andee Lowenstein
Frances Malecki
Toni Mcll trout
Margaret J. McKenna
Andrew and Suzanne McLaren
David Dzombak and Carolyn Menard
Bobbie Mikita
Esther Nathanson
Lina Pascoli
Marisa Pomp e o
Carolyn Reuter
Joel and Adele Roman
Carl and Cindy Rothenberger
Joyce Rothermel
Ina G. Sable
Christine Salera
Helen Schaefer
Ellie Schoenberger
Carol Schutte
Suzanne Smolin
Susie Steele
Toni Stevens
Taylor Stevens
Dick and Thea Stover
Sara Talarico
Anthony Theofiledes
Leslie Weber
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!!”
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
CitiPartners
Department of Human Services The Education Partnership
RIF Reader Volunteers...
Alexandria Allen
Ari Altschuler
Michael Anastas
Joyelee Baldonieri
Angela Ballstrieri
Joanne Beckman
Peter Belcastro
Jill Beijer-Frederick
Jordan Blask
Danielle Boyd
Ashley 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 Lechlter
JoEllen Leech
Amy Lewis
Katelyn McGuire
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*

- Foundations 69.1%
- Individuals 13.4%
- Corporations and Partners 12.7%
- Program Service Fee 3.1%
- In-Kind, Interest, Dividends, and Investment 1.2%

Total Expenses:
$1,092,439^

- Storymobile 49.3%
- Everybody Wins! 10.7%
- Books for Keeps 23.8%
- Fundraising 10.5%
- Management and General 5.7%

*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!