

Reach Out and Read 10th Birthday Celebration Possible Talking Points for the First Lady

Some ideas:

- Refer to the power of reading to children – as a parent, if she likes, the strength of the memories it leaves with both parents and children
- The importance of starting early with parents – most literacy activity focuses on school-age kids – research shows you need to start earlier
- Emphasize how ROR gives parents a tool, and builds on a strong trusting relationship between pediatrician and parent

ROR Vital Statistics

- 5,000 pediatricians trained since 1989
- 1,700,000 books distributed each year by 492 sites in 47 states. — this yr.
- More than 830,000 children served each year
- Site Growth:
 - 1996: 67 sites serving 115,000
 - 1997: 179 sites serving 300,000
 - 1998: 418 sites serving 710,000
 - May 1999: 492 sites serving 830,000

Announcements

- **The Massachusetts House of Representatives** recently passed **Speaker Thomas Finneran's** visionary early childhood education initiative, now before the State Senate for consideration, which among other things will provide \$500,000 in matching funds to bring ROR to every child living in poverty in the Commonwealth. We hope that this effort will be the first of many, in which other states step up to the plate and join with the private sector to increase investment in the literacy of our youngest children.
- **Boston Medical Center HealthNet** will be the first managed care organization in the country to offer Reach Out and Read as a standard program benefit to its members.
- **Scholastic – TBA**
- This week, **CVS/pharmacy**, ROR's newest corporate partner, announced a \$250,000 gift to support local and national Reach Out and Read efforts in eight states and the District of Columbia.

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REACH OUT AND READ 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

DATE: June 4, 1999
TIME:
LOCATION: Boston Medical Center
FROM: Nicole Rabner

I. PURPOSE

To participate in the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Reach Out and Read program and announce . . .

II. BACKGROUND

Reach Out and Read has organized a celebratory, informal "birthday party" to celebrate its 10th anniversary. The event will bring together pediatricians, local ROR program directors, ROR donors, and children and parents participating in the program. The event will also have book characters such as Curious George and Arthur the Aardvark represented at the event.

Reach Out and Read

ROR is a program that makes early literacy a critical and integral part of pediatric primary care. Pediatricians encourage parents to read aloud to their young children and give their patients books to take home at all pediatric check-ups from six months to five years of age. Through ROR, every child starts school with a small library of wonderful children's books. Their parents gain an understanding that reading aloud may be the most important thing they can do to help their children learn to love books and to start school ready to learn. The ROR program responds to the reality that disadvantaged children often grow up in an environment devoid of books and reading. Parents of these children often lack money to buy books, may have limited access to good children's books, and may not themselves have been read to as children. Reading problems often translate into school failure, which in turn increases absenteeism and drop out rates. School failure often correlates with high risk behaviors among adolescents and the perpetuation of poverty and dependency.

Reach Out and Read (ROR) was founded 10 years ago by Dr. Barry Zuckerman.

HRC involvement in Reach Out and Read / Prescription for Reading

1/x/97 Georgetown University Medical Center book reading with Maurice Sendak and speaking program – call for Prescription for Reading partnership (Washington DC)

4/16/97 White House event launching the national Prescription for Reading partnership (Washington, DC)

3/2/98 Celebration of Prescription for Reading's *Read to Your Bunny* campaign with Cat in the Hat (District Heights, MD)

6/9/97 Launch of Baltimore Prescription for Reading effort (Baltimore, MD)

4/28/98 Launch of Chicago citywide expansion of Reach Out and Read and release of the Prescription for Reading partnership one-year report (Chicago, IL)

12/1/98 Launch of Greater New York Expansion of Reach Out and Read (Chicago, IL)

3/18/99 Speech before the Association of American Publishers (Washington, DC)

4/5/99 White House Easter Egg Roll featuring Prescription for Reading (Washington, DC)

Columns: 3/2/98

This year, the White House Easter Egg Roll will feature an innovative effort called Prescription for Reading. Recent scientific findings tell us that reading and talking to very young children is valuable for their healthy development, yet many parents are unaware of the importance of reading to their children when they still very young. Launched by the First Lady two years ago, the Prescription for Reading initiative uses the influence of doctors, health care professionals and librarians to ensure that all children become successful readers. Through the Prescription for Reading effort, doctors "prescribe" reading for parents and their children, writing actual prescriptions for this important family activity. Prescription for Reading draws from the support of a range of private partners -- from booksellers, publishers, libraries and hospitals to pediatricians, health centers, corporations and associations -- to advance this effort and bring books into the hands of parents and children. This year at the White House Easter Egg Roll, children and families will receive "Prescriptions for Reading" signed by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Surgeon General David Satcher. Families will be able to "fill" these prescriptions on the White House South Lawn by receiving a book donated by Scholastic, Inc.. For more information about the Prescription for Reading partnership, please call 617-414-5701 or visit to the website of either Reach Out and Read at <http://www.reachoutandread.org>, or the American Library Association's Born to Read initiative at http://www.ala.org/alsc/raise_a_reader.html.

**Coalition of Greater New York****TALKING POINTS ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ROR COALITION
OF GREATER NEW YORK**

- The Coalition membership has grown to 135 members representing 32 Hospitals and Health Centers operating 50 Reach Out and Read Programs and 18 Health and Literacy Organizations.
- The Coalition's 800 Health Providers have "prescribed" over 400,000 books at well-child visits in the five boroughs of New York City, Westchester and northern New Jersey.
- The Coalition has received over 100,000 books as in kind donations.
- ROR sites in the Greater New York Area has raised over \$300,000 for books.
- With the help of the National ^{Center} ~~Training site~~ we now have a Coordinator.
- The coalition had its official Kick-Off on December 1, 1998 launched by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.
- The Coalition has formed Library, Volunteer, Research, Education and Training Committees to provide ongoing support for its members.
- The Coalition is becoming an incorporated non profit organizations furthering our ability to raise funds.

Jun-02-99 10:03A Luz M. Collins-WFHC ADMIN 303-436-4405

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Reach Out and Read at Denver Health
Volunteer Readers' Anecdotes:

"One day a little girl, about 7 or 8 years old and I shared stories together for about 45-50 minutes. She read, I listened. I read, she listened. We shared the I Spy book....

When it was time for her to leave, an older woman who had been sitting and observing, (without my even being aware of it) came over to speak with me. She told me that the little girl had recently been through lots of trauma and changes in her life, and said this was the first time she had seen her even smile in 'lots of days'—and added, 'she was even talking to you and reading!' She thanked me over and over again, as the little girl hugged me good-bye. Ooooh, Wow!"

"One day after reading to a group of children, a boy was called to leave by his mother. I reminded him that readers were here on other days of the week, and he asked me if I would be reading the next Friday. When I assured him I would, he said 'Oh boy, I'm gonna be sick every Friday.' This program has given me as much as I have given it."

"There was a group of four girls, all from the same family. One of them asked me where did I get soooo many books. When I told her they were from the library AND that they were free, she was astounded. Then I told her they could get books from the library too—this was truly amazing. I passed out the library card applications, and the girls were full of questions—"Was the card free?" "How many books could they get?" "How long could they keep the books?" "What happened if they kept them too long?" "Would they go to jail?" When mama came to get them, they made her promise to stop at the library on the way home."

"A father brought his son over to the reading circle and asked if the little boy could join us even though the child couldn't speak English. We made room for them both, and the father translated each sentence quietly in his child's ear. It was soon evident the several of the other children in the group were bilingual, so I asked the father if he would like to read one of the Spanish stories to the kids. He read two stories, much to his delight and that of the children. The father later told me the family had only arrived from Mexico within the past month. He was very eager to learn American ways, and he felt it was an honor to be asked to read to the children."

"One way to measure the success of the program, is that the kids don't want to leave the reading circle---not to see the doctor, not to go home, and for one little boy, not even the enticement of a trip to McDonald's."

"This one child immediately moved his chair really close, had huge smile, and lit up his eyes once he saw I was going to read Spot. This kind of situation always makes it a delight to read to children."

Some children's thoughts:

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"If you could just be my teacher, I would always go to your school---and you could read me every book in the whole world!"

"You know, I'm liking books really good now! They like me like I like them!" (little boy about 6 years old)

"Read it again! I like the way the words talk!" (small boy, maybe 4)

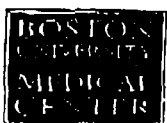
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For Immediate Release
June 1, 1999

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REACH OUT AND READ CELEBRATES 10th BIRTHDAY
Hillary Rodham Clinton to Join Celebration

Boston, MA -- First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is coming to Boston to join the celebration of the 10th anniversary of Reach Out and Read (ROR), a pediatric early literacy program founded at Boston Medical Center. The celebration will be held on June 4, 1999 at 11:00 am at Boston Medical Center. As part of the festivities Mrs. Clinton will laud the success of the ROR program as well as speak about the importance of reading to children.

ROR is a national pediatric literacy program that encourages parents to read to their children at an early age. Doctors give each child, aged 6 months to 5 years, a new book during their routine pediatric visits. Through ROR, every participating child starts school with a home library of at least 10 new books. While the books are free to the children, each home library costs approximately \$25.00. Over the past 10 years, ROR has distributed more than 3 million books to nearly 1 million children across the country. The program includes among its partners many foundations, corporations and individual supporters.

Mrs. Clinton has joined ROR national leaders around the country to implement local ROR sites. She has made financial contributions to the ROR program through proceeds of her book, *It Takes a Village*, and has also demonstrated her support by convening a national coalition to champion the "Prescription for Reading."

"It isn't very often that we have before us such a simple, inexpensive, and pleasurable way to improve our children's health and development and raise their prospects for a brighter future ... there is not better way to spend time than reading to your child," said Mrs. Clinton.

The ROR program was started in 1989 by Barry Zuckerman, MD, chief of pediatrics at Boston Medical Center and chairman of the Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine along with his colleagues. He was later joined by Perri Klass, MD, who is currently the medical director of ROR and assistant professor of Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

Boston Medical Center
Boston University School of Medicine
Boston University School of Public Health
Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine

ROR/BMC/2...2//

A 1985 National Commission on Reading study reported that reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for literacy development and eventual reading success. Overwhelming clinical, statistical and scientific evidence comes to the same conclusion: pediatric intervention and access to books can increase the likelihood of parents reading to young children that, in turn, stimulated the brain and increases the chance of literacy.

"Reach Out and Read is changing the practice of pediatrics to orient doctors toward the whole child, not just their physical well being. My goal for the year 2000 is that for pediatricians, giving books to children will be as routine as giving immunizations. Both are equally important," says Zuckerman.

Shortly after its founding, the ROR program established itself as a national model. Over the past 10 years, 492 ROR sites have been created across the US in 47 states. The growth rate over the past few years is astounding. The number of ROR sites has doubled each year for the past three years. In 1998, ROR gave out more than 1 million books, to more than 800,000 children from 6 months to 5 years of age.

"When I give my books to children in my primary care practice, I am emphasizing that health for children includes language and literacy. When a doctor gives a book to children, the doctor is offering an important message about the importance of reading. This is a reason that doctors and parents have been so receptive to this program," said Klass.

Other highlights of ROR include:

- ROR is a part of Read Boston.
- Pediatricians have evolved as a new constituency for promoting literacy activities in their communities.
- ROR is one of the only literacy programs to promote activities in the first few years of life. Most literacy programs usually target children in kindergarten and above.
- There has been an outpouring of bipartisan support for ROR in communities around the country.
- ROR participants show increased language skills, particularly among bilingual children.
- Children are being taught to love books at very early ages.

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June 3, 1999

REACH OUT AND READ 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

DATE:	June 4, 1999
TIME:	11:30 am – 12:30 pm
LOCATION:	Boston Medical Center Boston, Massachusetts
FROM:	Nicole Rabner

I. PURPOSE

To participate in the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Reach Out and Read program and announce new commitments to the program from Scholastic, Inc. and other private partners.

II. BACKGROUND

Reach Out and Read has organized a celebratory, informal “birthday party” to mark its 10th anniversary. The event will bring together pediatricians, local ROR program directors, volunteers, donors, and children and parents participating in the program. In addition, the event will include book characters such as Curious George and Arthur the Aardvark.

Announcements

You will recognize several new private sector commitments to ROR on the occasion of its 10th anniversary: (1) Scholastic, Inc. will donate 100,000 books over the next year to serve new children and new sites, and will extend another year its challenge grant to national ROR, giving \$5,000 worth of books for every \$100,000 that ROR; (2) Houghton-Mifflin Publishers and Candlewick Publishers will pledge enhanced support and book donations; (3) CVS/Pharmacy will provide \$250,000 to support ROR efforts in 8 states and the District of Columbia; (3) the Cordelia Corporation will donate \$300,000 over three years to support the continued expansion of ROR and will provide \$50,000 in books for the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York; (4) Pfizer Pediatric Health Corporation will expand its commitment to ROR and support the first national ROR conference; and (5) Boston Medical Center HealthNet will be the first managed care organization to offer ROR as a standard program benefit to its members.

Action in the Massachusetts House of Representatives

The Massachusetts House of Representatives recently passed a bill to provide \$500,000 in matching funds to bring ROR to every child living in poverty in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (the legislation is now before the State Senate). The Speaker of the House, Thomas Finneran, who sponsored the legislation, will speak at the event.

Reach Out and Read – 10 Year Statistics

In the past 10 years, ROR has:

- Trained over 5,000 pediatricians.
- Received book donations from publishers worth over \$1 million.
- Overseen rapid growth: the number of ROR sites has doubled each year for the past five years:
 - 1996: 67 ROR sites serving 115,000 children
 - 1997: 179 ROR sites serving 300,000 children
 - 1998: 418 ROR sites serving 710,000 children
 - **May, 1999: 492 ROR sites serving over 830,000 children in 47 States with 1.7 million books distributed**

Reach Out and Read – General Background

Founded in 1989 by Dr. Barry Zuckerman, ROR makes early literacy an integral part of pediatric primary care. Pediatricians encourage parents to read aloud to their young children and give their patients books to take home at all pediatric check-ups from six months to five years of age. Through ROR, every child starts school with a small library of children's books. Their parents gain an understanding that reading aloud may be the most important thing they can do to help their children learn to love books and start school ready to learn.

Prescription for Reading Partnership

Drawing on the momentum of ROR and the American Library Association's Born to Read program, you launched the Prescription for Reading initiative two years ago to harness the influence of doctors, health care professionals and librarians to ensure that all children become successful readers. Through the Prescription for Reading effort, doctors "prescribe" reading for parents and their children, writing actual prescriptions for this important family activity. Prescription for Reading draws from the support of a range of private partners – from booksellers, publishers, libraries and hospitals to pediatricians, health centers, corporations and associations – to advance this effort and bring books into the hands of parents and children.

HRC involvement in Reach Out and Read / Prescription for Reading

1/10/97 Georgetown University Medical Center book reading with Maurice Sendak and speaking program – call for Prescription for Reading partnership (Washington DC)

4/16/97 White House event launching the national Prescription for Reading partnership (Washington, DC)

3/2/98 Celebration of Prescription for Reading's *Read to Your Bunny* campaign with Cat in the Hat (District Heights, MD)

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3/18/99 Speech before the Association of American Publishers (Washington, DC)

4/5/99 White House Easter Egg Roll featuring Prescription for Reading (Wash, DC)

Boston Medical Center

Boston Medical Center is a private, not-for-profit, 547 licensed bed, academic medical center, located in Boston's historic South End. Emphasizing community-based care, the hospital's mission is to provide consistently excellent and accessible health services to all. Boston Medical Center provides a full spectrum of pediatric and adult care services, from primary and family medicine to advanced specialty care. Boston Medical Center provides approximately \$150 million in free health care to vulnerable populations each year, making it the largest safety net hospital in Massachusetts. With more than 420,000 patient visits annually, Boston Medical Center provides a comprehensive range of inpatient, clinical and diagnostic services in more than 70 areas of medical specialties and subspecialties including cardiac care and surgery, hypertension, neurological care, orthopedics, geriatrics and women's health.

Overview of Event

You will first participate in a small meet and greet reception with ROR donors and leadership. Then, you will proceed to the speaking program. Dr. Elaine Ullian, President and CEO of Boston Medical Center will making brief welcoming remarks and introduce Dr. Perri Klass, Medical Director of ROR, who make brief remarks about the importance of the program from the pediatrician's point of view. Dr. Klass will then introduce Aneesah Abdullah, a parent who has participated in the ROR program in Boston who will talk about the importance of ROR in the lives of her children. Dr. Klass will then introduce Dr. Barry Zuckerman, founder of ROR, who will speak briefly about the 10-year history of ROR and speak about your critical role in the growth and success of the program. Finally, you will give remarks and close the program.

II. PARTICIPANTS

Stage Participants

Mrs. Clinton

Thomas Finneran, Speaker of the MA House of Representatives

Dr. Barry Zuckerman, ROR Founder

Dr. Perri Klass, ROR Medical Director

Mrs. Elaine Ullian, President and CEO of Boston Medical Center

Aneesah Abdullah, parent

Audience: Approximately 300 pediatricians, local ROR program directors, volunteers, donors, children, and parents.

III. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- YOU are greeted by Drs. Barry Zuckerman and Perri Klass.
- YOU proceed to a brief VIP reception.
- YOU proceed to event speaking program.
- Elaine Ullian, CEO, Boston Medical Center, announces YOU and other stage participants into the room. Yulliam makes brief welcoming remarks and introduces Thomas Finneran, Speaker of the Massachusetts State House of Representatives.
- Speaker Finneran makes brief remarks
- Elaine Ullian introduces Dr. Perri Klass.
- Dr. Perri Klass, ROR Medical Director, makes brief remarks and introduces Aneesah Abdullah, parent.
- Aneesah Abdullah makes brief remarks.
- Dr. Perri Klass introduces Dr. Barry Zuckerman, ROR Founder and Chief of Pediatrics.
- Dr. Barry Zuckerman makes remarks and introduces YOU.
- YOU make remarks.
- YOU work a ropeline and depart.

IV. PRESS PLAN

Open Press.

V. REMARKS

Provided by Christy Macy.

Reach Out & Read 10th Anniversary Celebration

Meet & Greet List

Amy Belkin	ROR donor
Joan Belkin	ROR donor
Steve Belkin	ROR donor
Aram Chobanian, MD	Dean, Boston University School of Medicine
Steve Cohen	Managing Director, Scholastic, Inc.
John Cragin	ROR donor
Susan DelMonico	Community Relations Mgr.-CVS/pharmacy
Marilyn Fife	ROR donor
Thomas Finneran	Speaker, MA House of Representatives
Donna Finneran	wife of Speaker
Kathleen Fitzgerald Rice	ROR Founder
Arthur Golden	ROR donor & author Memoirs of a Geisha
Jennifer Hammond	Community Relations Mgr. -CVS/pharmacy
Robie Harris	ROR donor –Literary Board Member- author
William Harris	ROR donor
Jane Hirsh	ROR donor, Copley Pharmaceuticals
Mark Hirsh	ROR donor, Copley Pharmaceuticals
Joanne Y. Jaxtimer	Dir. Corporate Affairs/ Mellon Bank. The Boston Co.
Ed King	VP for Government & Community Affairs
Margie Kuo	Pfizer Pediatric Health –corporate donor
David F. Lamer	Chairman & CEO, Mellon Bank/ The Boston Co.
Nicholas Littlefield	partner, Foley, Hoag & Eliot
James P. Palermo	President, Mellon Bank/The Boston Co.
Jeffrey Robbins	attorney, Mintz, Levin, donor
Bernie Rogan	Shaw's Supermarkets – Corporate Donor
Anne Schwarz	ROR donor
Lisa Schwarz	Chair, Friends of ROR, ROR donor
Dr. Richard Sheeman	Chief of Thoracic Surgery, BMC (brother of Ken Sheeman, Rose Law Firm)
Alan Solomont	BMC Board
Susan Lewis Solomont	BMC volunteer
Elaine Ullian	CEO, BMC
Richard Towle	Senior VP, Boston University
Katherine Zuckerman	artist

Biography of Aneesah Abdullah

Aneesah Abdullah is a twenty-seven year old mother born in Jamaica who benefited from the Boston ROR program. She moved to the United States of America in 1983 and has a degree in Early Childhood Education from Roxbury Community College. She has three children, Muhommad aged seven, Sumaiyyah aged three and Idris aged two. She has recently bought a small business franchise, which she is trying to start up at this time.



BIOGRAPHY

Perri Klass, MD

Barry Zuckerman, M.D.
Professor and Chairman of
Pediatrics
Boston Medical Center
Founding Director
Reach Out and Read

ROR National Staff

Perri Klass, M.D.
Medical Director

Christine Angell

Nancy Berman

Patricia Cowan, R.N.

Elaine Grossman, M.Ed.

Abigail Jewkes, Ed.M

Matthew Veno

Kate Williams

Perri Klass, MD, is a pediatrician who serves as Medical Director of Reach Out and Read at Boston Medical Center, where she is Assistant Professor of Pediatrics. She has trained pediatricians in Boston around the country in literacy development, in how to counsel parents about books and looking at books with their children, and in how to integrate books and literacy into routine pediatric care. Dr. Klass also has a pediatric primary care practice at Dorchester House, a neighborhood health center in Boston, where she is part of an active health center Reach Out and Read Program, giving books to patients at their well-child visits.

Dr. Klass is an extensively published writer, whose most recent books include Other Women's Children, a novel, and Baby Doctor: A Pediatrician's Training, a collection of essays. Her short stories have won five O. Henry Awards and have been widely anthologized, and her essays and journalism have appeared in The New York Times Magazine, Parenting, Discover, Esquire, American Health, and many other newspapers and magazines.

Through her work with Reach Out and Read, Dr. Klass has been able to integrate her commitment to the health care of young children with her love of books, stories, and the written word. In an essay on the program, she wrote, "When I think about children growing up in homes without books, I have the same visceral reaction as I have when I think of children in homes without milk or food or heat: It cannot be, it must not be. It stunts them and deprives them before they've had a fair chance."

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Barry Zuckerman, M.D.

Barry Zuckerman, M.D., is Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health, and Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs at Boston University School of Medicine, and Chief of Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center. His major interests are in promoting the health and development of children through generating information, training child professionals from all disciplines and establishing more effective services. Dr. Zuckerman developed and implemented special programs for children in Boston, some of which are being disseminated nationally. These programs emphasize prevention, and go beyond traditional medical care. The Reach Out and Read Program (ROR) which is being replicated nationally, promotes literacy for young children in primary care settings by having pediatricians give a book to each child at every health supervision visit, starting at six months. The Pediatric Pathways to Success Program is a primary care program that expands access to needed basic services and child development and parenting information and services. This program serves as the model for The Healthy Steps Program; a multi-site national trial of similar expanded pediatric services. The program content was developed by and the training is provided by Dr. Zuckerman and colleagues. The Family Advocacy Program provides individual legal advocacy, staff, housing and policy work to ensure that families have their basic needs (health care, food, housing, safety, etc.) met to improve the effectiveness of pediatric care. The Women and Infant's Program provides addiction counseling in a pediatric setting and served as a model for federal legislation. The Boston Training Center for Infants trains clinicians (doctors, nurses, social workers), educators, graduate students, and others who work with young children and their parents by disseminating knowledge regarding the "whole child - whole family" approach to care.

Dr. Zuckerman is an author of more than 120 scientific publications emphasizing the relationship and impact of biological, social, health services and psychological factors on children's health and development. He is an editor of four books, including a Spanish version (Behavioral and Developmental Pediatrics: Handbook for Primary Care). He played a significant role in the development of American Academy of Pediatrics Child Health Supervision Guidelines and the government sponsored Bright Futures Guidelines For Preventive Health Care. He has been a Visiting Professor and named lecturer at thirteen medical schools, and an invited lecturer to seven countries. Dr. Zuckerman serves on four editorial boards. He has received a National Leadership Award from the Children's Defense Fund, an Honorary Degree in Education (Ed.D.) from Wheelock College, Boston and has served as a member of special national groups, including The National Commission on Children, NIH Consensus Development Conference, The Carnegie Commission on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, Institute of Medicine Task Force NIH Review Committee and others. He has also served on state and local boards and task forces.

He has been past Chairman of the Section of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, a member of the Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health for the American Academy of Pediatrics, a Board Member of Zero to Three - National Center for Infants and Toddlers, and National Center for Children and Poverty. He has made numerous presentations to professional societies, United States Congress, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Legislature, National Academy of Sciences, and parent groups.

ELAINE ULLIAN

Elaine Ullian is President and Chief Executive Officer of Boston Medical Center, a private, not-for-profit, 550-bed, academic medical center with a community based focus. Established in July 1996, Boston Medical Center, the country's first full asset merger of two public hospitals with a private academic medical center, is the merged entity of Boston City Hospital, Boston Specialty & Rehabilitation Hospital and Boston University Medical Center Hospital. Boston Medical Center annually provides approximately 400,000 outpatient visits and 80,000 emergency department visits to the certified Level-One Trauma Center. The Boston Medical Center has nearly 4,000 FTEs, 1,400 physicians and has an annual operating budget of \$500 million.

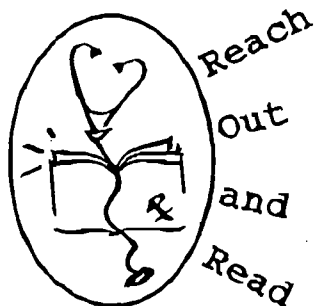
Boston Medical Center offers a full spectrum of pediatric and adult care services, from advanced specialty services to outreach programs for the city's homeless population and frail elderly. Focusing strongly on urban health, Boston Medical Center is a founding partner of the Boston HealthNet - a group of twelve community health centers that provide 1,000,000 community health visits a year. Boston Medical Center is a major teaching affiliate of Boston University's School of Medicine, School of Public Health and Goldman School of Dental Medicine.

With more than 25 years of health care experience in the public and private sectors, Mrs. Ullian had previously served as President and Chief Executive Officer of Boston University Medical Center Hospital and President and Chief Executive Officer of Faulkner Hospital, as well as held leadership positions at New England Medical Center Hospital and with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Mrs. Ullian is active in many professional and service organizations. She is Chairperson of the Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals and serves on committees of both the American Hospital Association and the Association of American Medical Colleges. She serves as one of seven members of the Board of the City of Boston Public Health Commission which functions as the City's Health Department. Mrs. Ullian is a member of the Board of Directors and also sits on the Executive Committee of the Board of the Massachusetts Hospital Association. In addition, she is an active member of the Health Research and Development Institute, a board member of Hologics, Inc. and Vertex, Inc., and chair of Celebrate Discovery, Inc. Mrs. Ullian served on the Transition Team for Governor William Weld and for Mayor Thomas M. Menino.

Mrs. Ullian is an Associate Professor at Boston University School of Public Health and a member of the faculty at the Harvard University School of Public Health. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Tufts University and a Masters Degree in Public Health from the University of Michigan.

Mrs. Ullian is the recipient of several honors and awards. In 1998, she received the YWCA Women's Achievement Award and also the Boston University School of Medicine Award of Achievement in Administration. In 1996, she received the Distinguished Service Award from Tufts University and the New England Council's Leadership Award to Women in Business. In 1995, she received the Boston Club Achievement Award and the Fifth Anniversary Community Service Award from the Bostonian Club. She was recognized in 1994 by the Massachusetts Health Council for outstanding leadership in public health. Her other awards include the Abigail Adams Award, presented in 1992 by the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus, and the Maimonides Award for outstanding leadership in healthcare, presented to her by the Anti-Defamation League in 1989.



Barry Zuckerman, M.D.
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Matthew Veno

STATISTICS ON NATIONAL IMPACT – AS OF JUNE 4, 1999

Achievements to Date (1989-Present)

- 830,000+ children reached annually by the program at its current level
- 1.7 million books "prescribed" by pediatricians and given to children
- 492 ROR sites in 47 states, trained and awarded startup book grants
- 5,000 pediatricians trained in pediatric literacy intervention
- ROR is the core program in the Prescription for Reading Partnership, kicked off and championed by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
- Reading aloud and books is now recognized by the American Academy of Pediatrics as an integral part of the healthy development of young children, and will make daily reading a "standard of care" for all children.
- Book donations from publishers worth more than \$1,000,000
- Established "Scholastic Challenge", whereby every donation of \$100,000 made to ROR is matched by a 5,000 book donation

Recent Highlights

- Last week, CVS/pharmacy, ROR's newest corporate partner, announced a \$250,000 gift to support local and national Reach Out and Read efforts
- On May 8, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed Speaker Thomas Finneran's visionary early childhood education initiative, as part of the FY 2000 Budget, which will provide \$500,000 to match private sector funding, to bring ROR to every child living in poverty in the Commonwealth.
- On June 2, The Cordelia Corporation announced a gift of \$300,000 to support the continued expansion of ROR sites over the next three years. In addition, it has made a gift of \$50,000 for books for children served through the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York
- On June 4, Scholastic, Inc., will announce another donation of 100,000 new children's books to the Reach Out and Read National Center to help start up new programs. Scholastic is also extending for another 12 months the national challenge program, whereby for every \$100,000 raised by the ROR National Center, it will contribute 5,000 new books.
- On June 1, Pfizer Pediatric Health announced an expanded commitment to Reach Out and Read in 1999. Pfizer plans to provide financial resources to support the first national ROR conference and strategic planning
- Both Houghton-Mifflin Publishers and Candlewick Publishers have pledged special commitments to ROR. Houghton-Mifflin will send each ROR site a birthday book for each waiting room reader book collection, while Candlewick will be including their Maisy books in the ROR book catalogue
- The Boston Medical Center HealthNet will be the first managed care organization in the country to offer Reach Out and Read as a standard program benefit to its members.

Goals for 2000

- Pediatric intervention will increase a child's capacity to start school ready to learn to read
- ROR will reach 50% of the 5 million low income children between the ages 6 months and 5 years
- All pediatric residency programs will include emergent literacy skills development as a standard part of training pediatricians
- 9 million reading prescriptions will be written each year
- 10,000 pediatricians will be trained in pediatric literacy intervention

The Washington Post

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 Close to Home

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1998

Sense and Dispensability

My Patients Want More Than a Medical Diagnosis—and So Do I

By PERRI KLASS

Sage advice is my business, my true stock in trade. Sure, I give shots, look into ears and listen to chests, but by far the largest part of my job involves listening to people talk about their children and then responding with guidance, recommendations—what I hope I can call expertise.

Each time I respond to questions and concerns from parent or child, I bear in mind that all these, depending on how you look at them, are either opportunities for guidance and help, or intrusions of professionalism and expertise into people's private lives. Most of these are conundrums without one all-purpose—and scientifically proven—answer. So what gives me the right to speak out? Who made me the expert, after all, on family harmony or helping with homework? I talk about limit-setting all the time, but where should I set my own limits?

As a pediatrician, I start from the assumption that my job is to avert danger and promote my patients' healthy growth and development. I believe that healthy children are more than the sum of immunizations and safety pre-

cautions, and that parents want more for their children (and from their pediatricians) than the absence of disease and injury. So conversations in the exam room veer, easily from medications and child-proofing to emotions and discipline and on to behavior and bonding, and even to books and reading—a topic that has become my special obsession even though it seems remote from the medical realm. Regularly and faithfully, I counsel parents about the importance of reading aloud to their children, about beginning early with books and helping their toddlers grow up to love the printed page.

Of course, when it comes to giving strictly medical advice, the answer is relatively easy. It's all part of my professional duty. I know it's my responsibility to teach parents how to take a baby's temperature, or explain the difference between a cold and a serious bacterial infection. And I feel I have a right and responsibility to cover areas that the pediatric profession has increasingly taken on: sleep position, say, or car seats, speech and language. I have the wisdom of pediatric textbooks and a weight of experience in the office and on the hospital wards on my side.

But it's not so simple when it comes to sibling rivalry or television watching (even though, remarkably, these and many other subjects fall within our purview according to the professional organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics). And what about those persistent thoughts of my own sometimes-slapdash child-rearing methods that make me feel like a hypocrite whenever I sound off with particular righteousness?

Well, I do believe that parents these days often look to pediatricians to provide the sort of expertise that once was given by a resident grandparent or neighboring aunt. The ability to temper received wisdom with hard-won reality is by and large welcomed, so my colleagues and I often function in the role of an extended family, offering up our own problems and parental shortfalls. Whenever I start to offer wise counsel on the subject of sibling rivalry, for example, the sound of my three children in the back seat of the car rises before me. "She put her finger over the line on the seat! That means I get to hit her!" And I replay in my head the

considered, measured response of their mother, the pediatrician: "If you don't stop this I'm going to pull the car over to the side of the road and..." I work with one doctor who cheerfully chronicles the vicissitudes of potty training her own sons, and the persistence of nocturnal enuresis (that's bed-wetting) into the fifth year of life.

And yet, and yet. Parents who come to me for advice deserve more than my prejudices and parental stories, filtered perhaps through a net of medical authority. Just because I didn't handle something very well at home doesn't mean they shouldn't try to do it better; just because a problem never came up in my own home doesn't mean I can shrug off the question. And just what weight should my words carry? Today's experts on behavior and development often begin their talks with a reference to the folly of yesterday: "They used to tell people, 'Don't kiss your children.'"

"They used to tell people, 'Put babies on a rigid schedule by one month of age.'" Child-rearing practices reflect their times—the science but also the social beliefs and the prevailing culture. And some of what I recommend will sound good today and funny 50 years from now, when new experts quote my sage counsel as obvious folly to enliven the beginnings of their lectures.

So I read and I learn. I believe it's my responsibility to tell parents when there are strong differences of opinion; I also tell them when there's good advice that I know will be hard to follow. And I guess I choose my issues carefully. I am rather weak on schedules and routines (which we have never managed to institute at my house), weak on baby food (which none of my children was ever willing to eat), and weak on timeouts (which I don't seem to have the personal authority to promulgate). But I'm stronger on breast-feeding (that much personal authority I do have), reliable on tantrums (been there, done that), excellent on day care (ditto), and now perhaps strongest of all on reading to young children—bringing books into babies' lives by 6 months of age, helping them grow up un-

derstanding that books are sources of pleasure and information, stories and rhymes and words and adventures.

I believe in reading because of personal experience, but I feel justified in promoting the message to my patients because that personal experience is compounded and reinforced by reading theory: by the reports of primary school teachers, by scientific studies on what educators call the intergenerational transmission of literacy and by a new and growing body of research on the effectiveness of pediatric literacy programs. This research shows that early exposure to books promotes language development, that children who are read to are more likely to learn to read "on schedule," that children who have grown up with books start school with an array of

early literacy skills. In studies of pediatric literacy programs targeted at children growing up in poverty (and therefore at significantly higher risk of reading problems), getting advice and a

book from the pediatrician has been associated with dramatic increases in parents reading aloud.

It wasn't ever part of my planned career path, but now I'm even running a pediatric literacy program. Reach Out and Read currently has doctors in more than 400 health centers, hospital clinics and practices around the country giving advice about the importance of reading aloud at every routine checkup from 6 months to 5 years and giving children a beautiful new book at every one of those visits. Not only do I give this advice (and these books) to my own patients and their parents; a large part of my professional life these days is spent training other doctors and nurse-practitioners about how to encourage parents to read to their children (and scrounging for money from foundations and donors and for discounted books from publishers). Ten checkups (and don't even ask how many shots) from age 6 months to 5 years means 10 books in the home by kindergarten. I say to groups of doctors and nurses. And they think about their patients and reach for the books eagerly. And likewise, when my 4- and 5-year-old patients come

in for their checkups, they often remind me: "Am I getting a book? What book do I get this time?"

And I wonder, as I think about the larger issue of giving advice, whether the message resonates with me in part because this is not only advice I can give, but can honestly claim to have followed. No, I don't think it's my place to eliminate junk food, or to make brothers love their little sisters, and I hesitate to speak out too forcefully about bedtimes; but I have watched my children grow up with books, seen the passionate attachments formed by 18 months, when memorizing "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" went along with learning language and naming objects. I've seen that grow into the ability to follow complex stories and then into the determination to decipher print, and then finally into that most gratifying outcome—a child who begs to stay up late at night in order to finish a good book.

Of course I take note of the extensive brain research on the vital importance of stimulation in the first years of life to foster what the scientists call cognitive development and synaptic density. But the real intensity of this message for me is rooted in my own experience: Children need books. Children love books. Children who grow up with books have something wonderful in their lives.

The blend of personal experience, prevailing norms, medical training, common sense and true research-based practice which guides the advice I give is not a static mixture. I'll be struggling with this for the rest of my life, giving some kinds of advice more securely than others, looking for the most important messages and for the most effective ways to get them across. With confidence, I tell parents to read to their children, secure in the knowledge that there's good evidence that it will help their language development, help them be ready to read when the time comes, and help parents and children spend loving moments together; but even more secure in the certainty, based in my own life and the lives of my children, that reading together is simply a good thing. And at least, when it comes to bedtime (and yes, that was my 4-year-old running laps around the living room last night at 11), I can say to the parents who seek my counsel on how to rear their children, and say honestly, it helps to read a story. Even a story about a truck.

I'm telling you this, I'm an expert.

Parents often ask me for the kind of advice once given by a resident grandparent.

SUCCESS STORY: KANSAS CITY

KC Reads is a unique ROR program in that it involves collaboration between sites in two states—Kansas and Missouri. The road to collaboration has been interesting and challenging. In December, 1996, Kansas University Children's Center became one of the first ROR expansion sites in the country. Children's Mercy Hospital in Missouri announced their intent to become a ROR site shortly thereafter. Prompting from the ROR National Center led to a meeting between each site's program directors in May, 1997. Both felt it would be an exciting and desirable venture to untie the two institutions behind a common cause, recognizing that hurdles existed.

In August, 1997, the KC Reads collaboration was announced at a citywide book festival. Expansion to other sites throughout Kansas City began in mid-1998, and resulted in 7000 new books distributed, 70 reading volunteers trained, and 29 pediatric providers instructed in the concepts of ROR that year. To date, there are 8 ROR sites in Kansas City, ranging from large hospital-based clinics to smaller county health department locations.

"For me personally, my involvement with the Reach Out and Read Literacy Promotion Program is one of the main things that gives meaning to my work and is a constant source of rejuvenation."

--Hilary Bethke, MD
Children's Hospital Oakland, CA

"Read to four babies (one set of seven month old twins) and one preschooler to whom I read Chicka Chicka Boom Boom six times! Everyone laughed! The child loved it and read it with me the last three times."

--Reach Out and Read Volunteer
Kalamazoo, MI

"A boy about three years old was like a sponge. His family read one book; he brought it back with thanks and asked for another. They continue to read several books. When his name was called, he didn't want to go until the book was finished. I suggested they take home to keep. Much later they came out to leave and gave me the book. The family expressed appreciation for the use of the books. Plus the boy had his own book to take home to keep. Like a sponge, he was taking in every book he could, while leaving the books for others to enjoy."

--Reach Out and Read Volunteer
Greenville, SC

"An eighteen month old was thrilled to receive a new book, but the mom did not make eye contact, so I said, 'Is something bothering you?' She then told me she couldn't read and was ashamed. I reassured her that she could tell the story from the pictures and she has now enrolled in a learn-to-read program."

--Physician, Kansas City, KS

"Our staff feels a reading program in our clinic is not optional. It's a necessity. It is good family practice. We're going to do it."

--Patrick Keenan, MD, Medical Director
University of Minnesota/North Memorial Family Practice Residency

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steve Cohen, Scholastic Books and First Lady's Prescription for Reading
Danica Petroschius, Senator Kennedy's Office
Jennifer Klein, First Lady's Office

FROM: Kristin Bunce, America Reads Challenge, U.S. Department of Education

RE: Reach Out and Read

I wanted to update you on activities and conversations that have occurred over the past few weeks between Department of Education officials and individuals affiliated with Reach Out and Read.

Per the request from Senator Kennedy, Secretary Riley met with Dr. Barry Zuckerman, Terry Peterson and me on Friday, December 4, 1998 to discuss the Reach Out and Read (ROR) program as well as potential ways the Department of Education (ED) could support ROR's efforts. Following the meeting with Secretary Riley, Dr. Zuckerman met with Mary Jean LeTendre, Director of Compensatory Education Programs, Laura Wood, Director of the Federal Work-Study Program in the America Reads Challenge Office and me to continue the discussion that began with the Secretary.

We suggested that Dr. Zuckerman might want to seek support for the Reach Out and Read program in the following ways:

Speak at National Meetings and Conferences: Mary Jean offered to help ROR get on the agenda at various national meetings and conferences such as the Title I State Directors conference and the Great City Schools conference, etc.

Apply for Discretionary Grants. The Even Start Program in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) as well as the Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI) have discretionary funds. Dr. Zuckerman was encouraged by Mary Jean to submit a proposal for funding to the Even Start Program. Ellen Frawley, Director of the President's Coalition for the America Reads Challenge, has discussed with Steve Cohen that ROR might want to explore possibilities for funding within OERI.

Post Messages on the Reading Summit Listserv. As part of follow-up to the National Reading Summit that was held in September 1998, the America Reads Challenge office has set up a listserv for conference participants. I offered use of the listserv to Dr. Zuckerman as a networking mechanism for ROR.

Highlight ROR at the Reading Excellence Program Application Workshops. As part of the Reading Excellence Program's implementation strategy, the Department of Education will host 4-5 regional application workshops. The Secretary offered to highlight ROR at these regional conferences as potential community-based organizations with which LEAs might want to form partnerships.

Meet with the Office of Indian Education. We offered to set up a meeting with ROR and the Office of Indian Education at the Department.

Use Federal Work-Study Tutors. We suggested that ROR might want to tap into the Federal Work-Study program in America Reads. Laura Wood has agreed to help ROR with this effort.

Additionally, Dr. Zuckerman asked if the Secretary would participate in an advertising campaign that would include HHS, DOJ, and ONDCP. The Secretary said that we would support this effort.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like further information regarding any of the above mentioned suggestions.

CC: Kent McGuire
Leslie Thornton
Carol Rasco

First Book

1319 F Street, N.W.
Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20004
Phone (202) 393-1222
Fax (202) 628-1258

Call Carol Rasco



MEMORANDUM

TO: Jennifer Klein cc: Doris Matsui

FROM: Christine Benero
Steve Cohen
Kyle Zimmer

DATE: July 17, 1997

RE: America Reads Project

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us last week regarding the America Reads Challenge. It was exciting to be able to think through with you how we might be helpful in supporting the goals of America Reads and moving the project forward.

As a result of our conversations, we have taken the liberty of drafting a concept paper which outlines how First Book, in partnership with Reading is Fundamental, would propose working within the America Reads framework. We have drafted the proposal using two scenarios, the first targeting 5.4 million children over the next five years, the second 12.3 million children. Obviously there is much room for negotiation between the two.

We would appreciate your feedback on this concept and how we might proceed from here. We are aware Carol Rasco is hosting a briefing on America Reads Monday, July 28th and we are anxious to learn of the status of the initiative at that time.

Thanks again for your willingness to explore these ideas. We look forward to speaking with you again soon.



recycled paper

America Reads First Book and Reading is Fundamental Proposed Demonstration Project

To support the efforts of the America Reads Challenge, First Book and Reading is Fundamental (RIF), two of the country's premiere literacy organizations, propose a five year national, community-based demonstration project that builds on the efforts of existing literacy programs and volunteer tutors.

Two simple observations lie at the core of this proposed demonstration project:

- A recent Boston University study concluded that "for the poorest children, the lack of books may be the most significant barrier to literacy promoting experiences."
- Recent testimony by a variety of witnesses before Representative Bill Goodling's House Committee on Education and the Workforce all underscored one critical need: the need for better teacher training in reading instruction using research-based, phonics-oriented, proven techniques.

Consequently, this national demonstration project will:

- Utilize books to leverage the work of new and existing literacy tutors, teachers, and volunteers across the country; and
- Provide funds for enhanced teacher and tutor training in reading instruction.

These two activities strongly support the goals of the America Reads Challenge. Books empower children and serve as important incentives and motivators for parents, teachers, tutors, and mentors. Research-based teacher training that focuses on phonemic awareness and systematic phonics instruction provides teachers with critical, proven tools to help the most at-risk children.

The Concept: First Book and Reading is Fundamental, in cooperation with other literacy partners, will work in 245 (614) communities across the country over a five year period to provide new books to children in school-based and community-based literacy programs working with volunteer tutors to ensure that children read well and independently by the end of third grade. These same communities will be eligible for phonics-based, teacher training funds.

The Program: In the participating communities, First Book and RIF will work with established local advisory boards to identify existing school-based and community mentoring and tutoring programs serving at-risk children. First Book and RIF will distribute a new book to each child participating in the program each month for 10 months.

These same communities will be eligible to send up to one-third of their existing tutors and K-3 teachers to special local training sessions where research-based, phonics-oriented reading instruction will be taught.

This combination of the commitment of ten books per child and better teacher/tutor training will enrich local literacy programs' efforts to ensure independent reading by the end of third grade. In addition First Book and RIF will expand its efforts to reach homeless children throughout the 245 *(614)* communities by establishing standing children's libraries in community homeless shelters.

Children Reached: Over the next five years First Book and Reading is Fundamental, as part of the American Reads Challenge, will reach 5.4 million *(12.3 million)* of the hardest to reach children in 245 *(614)* communities across the country providing them with 25 million *(61 million)* new books.

Project Cost: The majority of funding for this project will be for the purchase of new books and direct teacher/tutor training. At an approximate cost of \$2.75 per book, and \$1000 per teacher trained, which includes the administrative cost of the program, **\$176 million over five years** will be needed for the purchase of 25 million books and 27,000 teachers trained.

The more aggressive scenario costs ***\$410 million for 61 million books, and 72,000 teachers trained, over five years.*** Annual breakdowns are as follows:

Scenario One

Year	Children Served	Communities	Teachers Trained	Book Cost	Training Cost	Total Cost
1	82,000	8	3,272	\$2,249,500	\$1,145,200	\$3,394,700
2	409,000	41	4,180	11,247,500	4,179,980	\$15,427,480
3	818,000	82	4,263	22,495,000	4,263,007	\$26,758,007
4	1,636,000	164	9,960	44,990,000	9,959,948	\$54,949,948
5	2,454,000	245	7,966	67,485,000	7,966,018	\$75,451,018
Total	5,399,000		27,514	\$148,467,000	\$27,515,153	\$175,982,153

Scenario Two

Year	Children Served	Communities	Teachers Trained	Book Cost	Training Cost	Total Cost
1	409,000	41	5,726	11,247,500	\$5,726,000	\$16,973,500
2	818,000	82	3,722	22,495,000	\$3,721,900	\$26,216,900
3	1,636,000	164	10,149	44,990,000	\$10,149,335	\$55,139,335
4	3,272,000	327	19,352	89,980,000	\$19,351,733	\$109,331,733
5	6,135,000	614	33,309	168,712,500	\$33,308,894	\$202,021,394
Total	12,270,000		72,258	337,425,000	\$72,258,861	\$409,683,861

*file Prescriptini for
Reading*

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS BEFORE ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN PUBLISHERS
MAYFLOWER HOTEL
WASHINGTON, DC
March 18, 1999

Thank you, Brian [Knez, CEO of Harcourt, Brace & Co.] for that generous introduction. I'm honored to be here -- surrounded by some of our most passionate advocates for books and reading -- the top publishers in the nation. I also want to thank Pat Schroeder for inviting me here today, and for the tremendous energy, commitment, and sheer joy she brings to everything she does. It's also a pleasure to join AAP in saluting National Public Radio for all they have done over the years to promote the love of reading and the love of books. It's hard to imagine the day without hearing the wonderfully familiar voices of Susan Stamberg; Linda Wertheimer, Bob Edwards; Scott Simon; Diane Rehm - and so many others who challenge and delight us every day. You know it must be an important occasion for Bob and Linda to be here *at the same time*. Given their schedules -- a rare event indeed. Bob, isn't this a bit late for you to be up?

I especially want to thank America's book publishers, for your many efforts over many years on behalf of children and reading. You know, the cause of early childhood literacy has gained a great deal of positive attention and support in the last few years, and I am very grateful for that. But there is a special place in heaven for those who came through with support early on.

I'm thinking of how the AAP stepped in and funded the printing of the original Reach Out and Read program manuals, back before it was a national program. It is hard to exaggerate how crucial such early support can be. You have a right to be proud of your record on promoting literacy -- not only among children -- but for all ages.

The idea that parents should read more and speak more to our children must seem intuitively obvious to almost every one of us in this room. Our parents no doubt read a great deal to us, and nurtured in us a love of reading, and we've tried to do the same with our children. But what many of us learned at the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning that we held in 1997 -- is that time sharing a favorite book with a child -- even a newborn -- does more than strengthen the bond between parent and child. A burst of new scientific research has shown that it also helps a baby's brain to grow, and prepares him or her for a lifetime of reading and learning.

Less than two decades ago, we thought that a baby's brain structure was virtually complete at birth. We now understand that it is a work in progress, and that everything we do with a child has an impact on that child's intellectual and emotional growth.

And it's not only reading to our children that has enormous benefits. Talking to them -- even newborns -- can also make a world of difference. A recent study shows that two-year olds whose parents talk to them have hundreds more words in their vocabularies than children with less talkative parents.

But as we all know, there are many parents who themselves were not raised in a book-rich environment and who don't spend a great deal of time reading and talking to their children. Over the years, I've met parents who clearly want to do everything they can for their children -- who tell me they never really talked to their babies because they thought they were too young to understand what they were saying. I've met parents who didn't believe they could read well enough to read a book to their child.

We knew that if we could somehow reach these parents and encourage them to be more verbal and to read to their children, we could go a long way towards eliminating the tragic learning gaps we so frequently see when children enter kindergarten. The question is, what is the best way to get this message out to parents that reading is important - not only when you're young -- but for an entire lifetime.

One promising answer is to engage pediatricians and nurses in the campaign, on the theory that parents trust the information they receive from medical professionals. That was the theory behind the successful Reach Out and Read Program that many of you supported. Two years ago next month, I had the honor of announcing a new national effort, based in large part on Reach Out and Read, to use the trust and influence of doctors and health care professionals, along with librarians, to encourage more parents to read to their children -- and make those children readers themselves.

We called our national effort the Prescription for Reading Partnership, and we picked that word “prescription” for a reason. When we think of “prescriptions” we think of those slips of paper doctors give us for medicine that have been scientifically proven to improve our health. We wanted to emphasize that reading is as vital to our children’s health and well being as inoculations, medical checkups, good diet, and exercise.

I am proud to say that in just two years, nearly 400,000 books have been donated to the Prescription for Reading partners by major publishers -- including many of you in this room.

And the number of children served has increased from 150,000 to over 780,000. I'm also pleased to report that the hospitals and health centers involved in this project have increased dramatically -- as have the number of physicians and nurses who have been trained in early childhood development as a result of this program. I'm so grateful that you have been our partners in this increasingly successful effort. And I urge all of you to continue and to strengthen that support in the years ahead.

As much as we've done, we clearly must do more. And as the President has so frequently said, the time to do more is now, when our nation is stronger, our economy more prosperous, and our people more confident than at any time in years. I am proud of what my husband and his Administration have accomplished during the last six years to help children and improve education. We've increased investment in early childhood learning through Head Start; dramatically expanded after school programs that keep children safe and engaged during the hours when many parents work and juvenile crime soars. Through the President's America Reads program, we've begun to organize an army of tutors to help elementary school children learn to read and middle and high school students to prepare for college.

And progress has been made towards connecting every school and library in America to the Internet. Perhaps most importantly, we're reducing class size in the early grades -- by helping schools hire more teachers.

Looking toward the future -- the President has set out a new education and literacy agenda that will further expand after school programs; help more parents meet their child care needs; and promote early childhood learning programs, so more children get to school ready to learn. We're increasing support for our public schools -- but also insisting that we invest in what we know works for our children -- and stop investing in what we know does not work.

Yet we know it will take more than government actions to boost learning and reading among all of our children. As this gathering knows so well -- the private sector can and must play an important role. That is why I am privileged to be able to announce two new private-sector-led initiatives that can have a significant and positive impact on our children -- by encouraging their parents to read as well.

First, AAP will begin an ambitious public awareness campaign called “Get Caught Reading,” designed to spark an interest in reading among Americans age 18 to 34-- the age group that includes parents of young children. This industry-wide campaign will include posters in major book store chains and donated print ads in leading magazines. How can its message -- that reading is “cool” -- not be effective when Whoopie Goldberg and Rosie O’Donnell are among those “getting caught”? As Pat Schroeder says -- it’s important for all of us to work together to promote the “sheer joy” of reading.

Second, I am pleased to announce that the McDonalds Corporation will team up with the U.S. Department of Education and others to remind families of how important it is to read to their children. Beginning next October, McDonalds will produce 13 million Happy Meals bags that have attached to them booklets explaining to parents the importance of nourishing their children’s minds through reading. This is a great way of reaching out to those parents who are clearly on the run with their children between one event and another -- and who need -- like all of us -- to hear how important it is to stop, take a breath, and read a book.

I hope these new initiatives will inspire others in the private sector to make similar commitments to promote reading. There are few more critical missions we can undertake as we enter the 21st century.

And again, I want to thank everyone in this room for your work on this critical issue.

We truly are living in an exciting time -- as we come to the end of a century -- and begin a new millennium. And we are all thinking about new ways to mark this unique time in human history in meaningful and thoughtful ways. At the White House, we've chosen as our millennium theme "Honor the past, Imagine the future." And of course we could do neither if it weren't for the books we read and cherish and hand down to our children and grandchildren. Because it's what we write -- whether on the walls of caves in pre-historic times -- on the pages of ancient manuscripts -- or on today's global Internet -- that has forever shaped our history, and told the story of who we are -- and who we want to become.

Tomorrow I'll be visiting Alex Haley's farm near Knoxville, Tennessee -- where the Children's Defense Fund will be bringing artists, scholars, writers, and religious and community leaders together to talk about how to infuse new energy and ideas into solving some of our most intractable problems of race and poverty in America.

And I know that one of the ways that we will engage in this search for answers is by talking about the books we've read that have helped to break down the barriers that still divide us -- and that have given us the courage to take the next step.

Thank you for all you do to spark the imagination of a young child; to give a tired parent a good reason to curl up and relax at the end of a day; to inspire in all of us a reverence for the past -- and the desire to fulfill the promise of tomorrow.

Thank you.