

The Prescription for Reading Partnership



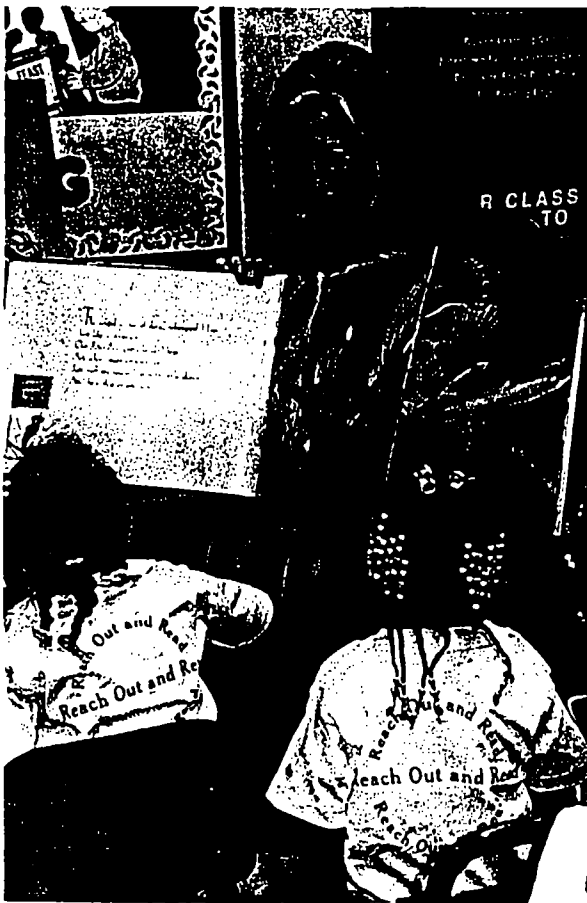
Annual Report
April 1998

The Prescription for Reading Partnership

On April 16, 1997, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton launched the *Prescription for Reading Partnership*. The Partnership is a public-private initiative that builds on and expands two proven literacy programs: *Reach Out and Read* (ROR) and the American Library Association's, *Born to Read*.

The Prescription for Reading Partnership has a single, critical goal: to use the reach and influence of doctors, health care professionals, and librarians – with the support of non-profit organizations, trade associations, corporations, and government agencies –

To foster early childhood learning and ensure that all children become successful readers.



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Highlights of the First Year

In the one year since the Partnership was launched:

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- The number of children served by Reach Out and Read (ROR) – the 9 year old program where doctors are trained to integrate early childhood learning into children's healthcare, and then "prescribe" reading to parents when they bring children in for check-ups, and give them free books – increased from 150,000 to 750,000.
- More than one million books were given free to families by ROR doctors – each one accompanied by encouragement and suggestions on how to read together.
- The number of hospitals and community healthcare centers actively participating in the ROR program has increased from 80 to 213. Thanks to the leadership of the National Association of Community Health Centers and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, there are now ROR programs in 43 states.
- 4,500 physicians and nurse practitioners were trained in early literacy development.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recognized that reading and books were an integral part of a healthy childhood. They established the encouragement of literacy as a "standard of care" for all children, and are taking steps to integrate it into the residency training for all pediatricians.
- More than 235,000 new books were donated to ROR by Scholastic and its partner First Book. Another 60,000 books were donated by Random House. In addition, a system to provide books at the lowest possible cost was put into place by a consortium of leading publishers and First Book.
- The number of libraries participating in the American Library Association's (ALA) Born to Read program – a partnership between librarians and health care professionals who reach out to expectant parents, conveying the importance of having healthy babies who are developmentally ready to read– expanded from 5 to 309. Some 360,000 families in 25 states were reached by these programs.
- The American Booksellers Association distributed 200,000 free copies of *Read to Your Bunny* by Rosemary Wells to families through health care providers and bookstores.
- 5 million copies of a "Reading Checkup Guide" were prepared by Reading is Fundamental (RIF) with support from Visa, and distributed to parents via pediatricians and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- A public service TV ad campaign promoting reading to young children ran on ABC television stations.
- A multi-lingual book publishing program was developed by Scholastic and the R.R. Donnelley Company. These children's books – published in 10 different languages, each with the English translation on the same page – will serve the millions of families whose native language is not English.
- The Association of American Publishers continued its financial support to ROR, and developed an advertising and promotional campaign called "Designated Reader" designed to spur more reading to children.
- A number of foundations not only fulfilled their generous financial commitments to ROR, but expanded them.

Snapshots from the Field

Children's Hospital,
Oakland, CA

One of the attending pediatricians shared this anecdote about the impact of the Reach Out and Read program. "I was in the clinic today and the kids said, 'Yes!' and jumped up and down when they heard they got a book! "

They were so excited! And I thought how nice, that they associate getting a book with coming to the doctor. I think that the program is really catching on! How nice that they relate coming to the doctor in a positive light, versus being a scary experience."

"Wakanayeja Yawapi"
(*"Children Read" in Lakota Sioux*)
Rosebud, SD
Lucy Reifel, MD

Dr. Reifel, the lone pediatrician, loads her van with medical supplies and children's books prior to conducting well-child visits at community centers and halls throughout the Rosebud Reservation. Due to the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the state, Dr. Reifel stresses the importance of reading to teenage mothers. Not only does she distribute the books; she is often the only volunteer reader. There are no libraries or bookstores on the reservation, so her efforts are especially appreciated.

The Prescription for Reading Partnership

Background

When First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton first convened a meeting of "interested parties" in the winter of 1997, the topic of doctors being trained in early childhood learning and reading had not yet entered the public's collective consciousness. But for the dozen or so representatives from healthcare organizations, the American Library Association, foundations, and trade associations, the First Lady's spotlight on the issue reinforced what they knew to be true, and what was soon recognized as a critical opportunity.

That recognition was based on the growing scientific evidence of the importance of parents regularly reading to their children from as early as six months of age. And it was based on the 8 years of clinical evidence about the influential role healthcare professionals – pediatricians, nurses, and others – could provide by "prescribing" reading to mothers when they brought their young children in for check-ups.

Since 1989, when a team of pediatricians and early childhood educators from Boston City Hospital collaborated to create a program that integrated the encouragement of early literacy into standard pediatric health care, the evidence of that involvement has become apparent. Parents who participated in Reach Out and Read programs are up to 8 times more likely to read to their children than parents who have not been exposed to this pediatric influence.

Similarly, there is a noticeable, positive impact on parents who have been exposed to books and reading through the American Library Association's Born to Read program – which reaches out even earlier, to mothers-to-be. Since 1995, the ALA's five Born to Read demonstration sites have shown that the integration of pediatric care, literacy outreach and books can make a difference in preparing children to be successful readers.

In March, 1997, recognizing the underlying support from key pediatricians, early childhood educators, and literacy advocates for the concept of pediatric involvement in literacy – and aware that the upcoming White House "Brain Conference" would generate greater public understanding – the First Lady's Office convened one more meeting.

But this time something more than just an enhanced awareness of the problem – and a recognition of some interesting, successful, but isolated initiatives – emerged.

Snapshots from the Field (Contd)

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

"I have a family in my clinic whose mother has exceptionally poor control of her five and a half year old twins. Although it rarely happens with other families in my clinic, Jasmine routinely ends up in time-out during her visits. That day was one of the worst: 4 five minute time-outs! When I asked her what the matter was, she said that she couldn't find her book. I said that she could take home any (used) book that she wanted. She said, "But I want the book YOU gave me." I was touched that my involvement was so important to her.

The most important thing that ROR has done for us is the First Book partnership. By making it possible to purchase books cheaply, ROR-Boston and First Book have functionally raised thousand of dollars for us. The more books we buy, the more money we don't have to raise. I am grateful on a daily basis for this alliance."

Responding to Mrs. Clinton's challenge to make something happen, a loose amalgamation of health care professionals, literacy advocates, and trade association representatives coalesced into a focused, coordinated task force: the Prescription for Reading Partnership was born.

On April 16, 1997, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, the First Lady launched the Partnership, discussed its goals, and announced the initial commitments from the partners. These commitments formed the basis of the last year's accomplishments discussed in this first Annual Report.

Mission and Goals

The mission of the Partnership is to ensure that:

- We create a nation of readers.
- We support at-risk parents in their role as the child's first teacher.
- Every child has the opportunity for healthy brain development through early stimulation of language and listening skills.
- Every child develops a love of reading as the basis for lifelong learning.
- We meet the America Reads Challenge of having every child read on level by the end of third grade.
- We break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty allowing all children to achieve their dreams.

The goals of the Partnership are to ensure that by the year 2000:

- Reading and books will be recognized as an integral part of a healthy childhood, and the encouragement of emergent literacy will be formally integrated into the pediatric "standard of care" for all children, and into the residency training of all pediatricians.
- Expectant parents will be apprised of tips for "raising a reader" through pre-natal clinics.
- Every child under the age of six will receive a "prescription for daily reading" from every pediatrician during every well-child check-up. That prescription will reinforce parents' daily reading to children, the importance of helping children grow up with books, and will be accompanied by advice and support from the doctor about ways to stimulate a child's healthy growth and development.

Snapshots from the Field (Contd)

**The University of Kansas Medical Center
Kansas City, KS
Virginia L. Tucker, MD**

"I would like to express my appreciation for the book that became available for David, a 2 year old young man who was seen in my General Clinic on May 21, 1997 for his Kan-Be-Healthy physical examination. David came with his 4 year old sister, 6 month old brother, and both parents. The book David received was the one with pictures of animals. Immediately, David's sister pounced on it, saw the pictures and asked her mother what the words were. She then, knowing the names of the animals, said "This is a ____" and told him the name of the animal, its color and where it lived. They must have gone through the book a half-dozen times or more, before he finished his clinic visit. He was particularly pleased that the book belonged to him and not to his sister. At the close of the interview and the physical, the mother stopped me to say that they were most appreciative for the book. As their Pediatrician, I wanted to express my appreciation to you and others who made this possible for David.

Another physician reports:

"A very difficult-to-examine 12 month old was given a book at the start of the exam. The baby was thrilled and I was able to do my exam while he looked at the book without difficulties. Also, an 18 month old was thrilled to receive a new book, but 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 pictures and she has now enrolled in a learn-to-read program."

- All children – and parents – will have access to books via local libraries, and will be encouraged to get a library card. In addition, librarians will provide tips on reading, and offer select lists of developmentally appropriate titles.

- The 6 million most at-risk children will receive free books in pre-natal clinics and from pediatricians during every well-child check-up.

Why This Initiative

The scientific evidence is now clear and compelling: babies' brains are not "prewired" before birth; brain growth in the early years is very rapid and can be stimulated by reading.

Like their physical development, which requires nurturing, human brains also need food to grow – stimulation from parents and caregivers. We know that brain growth during the early years is very rapid and has a profound impact on a child's healthy development and school readiness. Not surprisingly, we also know that reading to children can be one of the most important actions a parent can take to stimulate a child's learning capacity.

The Need

Unfortunately, far too many parents are unaware of the tremendous opportunity that reading on a regular basis to their young children can provide. According to "Starting Points," the 1994 report of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, fewer than half of American parents read to their infants and toddlers on a regular basis.

This tendency is most concentrated among families with lower incomes, thereby increasing the risk of illiteracy, failure in school, drug and welfare dependency. But the problem of parents not reading to children crosses the entire socio-economic spectrum, with researchers estimating that several million children under the age of six are not read to on a regular basis.

With a quarter of all children being born into homes below the poverty level, there are nearly 1 million newborns – and almost 6 million children under the age of 6 – who are most at-risk.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Fair Haven Community Health Center
Fair Haven, CT
Laurel B. Shader, MD, FAAP

"A critical component of the Fair Haven ROR program is the Story Corner in the waiting area, where community volunteers read stories to children of all ages and coach parents in reading aloud to their own kids. The new and "gently used" books that fill the shelves in the Story Corner are donated by individuals, schools, book stores, and religious and civic organizations. Children are invited and encouraged to take home any book they like -- more than 25,000 books have gone home so far. The Story Corner has completely changed Fair Haven's waiting-room environment for the better.

The health care and education of our children are inextricably linked. Children raised in an unstable environment, without a loving caretaker, without a medical home, without proper nutrition, start their school lives at a clear disadvantage. The forum for educating our families is as diverse as the families themselves. We reach out to families in our exam rooms and waiting areas, in child care settings, and the neighborhood library. We hope to cut through the barriers to literacy and create a population of children who reach school age healthy, safe, and ready to learn. We would like all of our children to walk down the hallways of the health center asking 'Can I have a book today?' And for all of their parents to be able to say: 'That last book you gave her -- oh, she loved it, we read it a hundred times!'

The Opportunity

There is now a very real opportunity to break this pattern of inadequate reading and to establish a new pattern: a pattern of more parents reading regularly to children.

This opportunity is based on several proven and promising programs developed by doctors and early childhood experts, and focuses on early intervention by pediatricians, other health care professionals, and librarians.

Pediatricians have a strong and trusting relationship with parents of young children. Indeed that relationship takes the form of "anticipatory guidance," wherein the doctor prescribes appropriate, healthy behavior, and the parent expects -- and often acts on -- it. One key component of the Prescription for Reading Partnership is the establishment of a formal link between anticipatory guidance and reading as a medical "standard of appropriate care."

Simply put, just as immunizations, a healthy diet, and child safety are standards of care, reading must become a standard of care.

The Strategy

The Partnership identified 4 key elements necessary to achieve its goals:

- Adequately trained and motivated doctors and librarians.
- Health care sites where reading will be prescribed and books distributed.
- Appropriate books for children.
- Creative, compelling messages that reach the target audience where they are-- watching TV, movies, listening to radio, shopping in stores-- and help motivate them to read to their children regularly.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Hasbro Children's Hospital Providence RI

As the children come through the double, metal doors and into the pediatric primary care center, it's not hard to tell which ones know about the RIF reading program here at Hasbro Children's Hospital. They're the ones hollering, "We're going to read today!"

"Reading at home is rare to nonexistent for these children," says the program's coordinator. "There are few books available at home, due to financial constraints." The Hasbro program primarily serves preschool children from an urban, low-income population that is multicultural and multilingual.

A one-year-old girl and her three-year-old brother arrive with their mother. They're just removing their coats when a college-age RIF volunteer approaches them, book in hand. He explains to the mother that he's about to start reading to a few children already gathered.

A few minutes later, both mother and children are listening to the story. The walls around them display colorful posters and, on a table, there are leaflets about family reading to take home. When the children are called into the examination room, it turns out the doctor has something to say about reading, too. She talks to the mother about the importance of reading aloud to young children, particularly to enhance their language development. Then, when the exam's finished, she guides the family to a big batch of RIF books and explains that the children can each choose one. They're delighted!

Commitments vs. Accomplishments

When the Partnership was launched on April 16, 1997, a list of commitments from the partners was announced. The "delivery" on these promises was significant and encouraging:

Commitment:

"The Reach Out and Read National Training Center at Boston Medical Center will train 10,000 pediatricians and pediatric residents by the year 2000 to implement Reach Out and Read programs in their local communities."

Accomplishment:

Reach Out and Read trained over 4,500 pediatricians and nurse practitioners in early literacy development, putting it well on its way to its goal of 10,000.

Commitment:

"The National Association of Community Health Centers' 950 member health centers will implement Reach Out and Read programs reaching one million parents and children by the year 2000; and

Commitment:

The National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions will challenge its 150 member hospitals to serve as training sites for Reach Out and Read programs, and is setting a goal of tripling the number of early reading programs currently operating in children's hospitals across the country by the year 2000. NACHRI will also disseminate information through its children's hospital members to parents about the importance of daily reading."

Accomplishment:

Reach Out and Read, working with the National Association of Community Health Centers and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions successfully increased the number of health care sites from 80 to 213. As a result, the number of children served by ROR-trained doctors increased from 150,000 to over 750,000.

Accomplishment:

NACHRI's summer 1997 edition of Children's Hospitals Today magazine carried an article promoting early reading programs to its readership of children's hospital CEO's administrators, trustees, clinicians, and community supporters.

***Snapshots from the Field (cont.)
(Hasbro Children's Hospital)***

Back in the waiting room, the RIF volunteer admires the three year old's new book, and talks with the child's mother, who is surprised to learn that the public library has free "storytime" hours when librarians read books aloud to young children. She wasn't sure that the library was free. Maybe she and the kids will go to the preschool reading hour next week.

With coats back on and books clutched tightly in hand, the children and their mom say goodbye.

Note: The RIF program at Hasbro continues to grow. Today, more than 150 volunteers are involved and over 14,000 books are distributed annually, thanks to increased funding from Abbott Laboratories, Billy Andrade Children's Charities, and golfer Brad Faxon. Dr. Pamela High, M.D. works with a hospital-based committee to coordinate the program. library was free. Maybe she and the kids will go to the preschool reading hour next week.

Accomplishment:

A special NACHRI publication, "Healthy Children in Healthy Families," featured a nuts and bolts article on how to establish a ROR program at a children's hospital. This publication was sent to community education directors, child advocacy directors and clinicians at children's hospitals nationwide.

Accomplishment:

NACHRI's consumer newsletter for parents, Starting Out Healthy, brought the message of the importance of early reading to more than 400,000 parents.

Commitment:

"The American Library Association will work with the nation's 16,000 public libraries to establish Born to Read programs, promoting partnerships between librarians and health care professionals teaching the critical importance of reading and preschool learning to parents of the 4 million babies born each year

Accomplishment:

The ALA made Born to Read an overall priority of the Association. The program was heavily promoted to its members, and it received significant press coverage in both American Libraries – the ALA's own official journal and in School Library Journal, where it was a cover story in July. As a result, the number of Born to Read sites increased from the original 5 demonstration projects to 309. Some 360,000 families in 25 states are currently reached by these Born to Read programs.

Accomplishment:

Born to Read received Federal funding for expansion in the state of Florida. Ten training teams worked throughout the state not only to expand Born to Read, but also to coordinate efforts with Reach Out and Read, thereby enhancing both the quantity and quality of service to families.

Accomplishment:

To further the coordination of the BTR and ROR programs, Dr. Robert Needleman, one of the founders of ROR participated in a program at the Public Library Association National Conference in Kansas City. At the same conference, Dr. Wendy Turnbull and Helma Hawkins from the Kansas City area talked about the success of the BTR project developed locally. More than 150 librarians from across the country were in attendance, most of who have requested further information about both programs.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Mississippi State Department of Health Immunization Program

When the Mississippi State Department of Health decided to provide some sort of incentive for parents to bring their children for their initial and follow-up shots as well as WIC certification, they considered t-shirts or tote bags as opposed to the historic candy incentive before they hit on a book. To Mississippi Department of Health officials, literacy and health are a natural partnership in the developmental life of the children.

Under the name "Healthy Start/Smart Start," the Mississippi State Department of Health Immunization Program began a partnership with Reading Is Fundamental. The goal is to provide books to children during their two, six and 12 month immunization visits at all 110 Mississippi State Department of Health clinic sites. Children served also include older children who come for immunizations or come with younger siblings. Virtually any child who comes to a clinic can choose a book as part of the program.

Mississippi, which has the lowest per capita income in the nation, the highest teen pregnancy rate, the highest school drop out rate, the lowest literacy level, and one of the highest infant mortality rates, also has one of the most active and accessible public health systems. The MSDH provides at least 85% of all childhood immunizations and prenatal care in the state. Because clinics are located statewide and can be found in especially rural areas, the program is reaching the neediest of Mississippi's children. Most health clinic patients have little or no money to purchase books. Many are unaware of the importance of reading to children at an early age and its link to success in school.

Commitment:

The American Academy of Pediatrics will provide its 53,000 members with a specially designed prescription pad to promote daily reading and age-appropriate activities to stimulate a child's early learning. It will also distribute to its membership checklists for parents and developmental milestones so that they can measure their child's growth and development.

Accomplishment:

The Academy has undertaken activities to: Formalize the Academy's support of reading initiatives and ensure an internal structure to address them. The charge to the AAP Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption and Dependent Care was expanded to include development and oversight of programs that promote reading.

Accomplishment:

The Academy also took steps to ensure that all relevant AAP policies and programs identify and promote the need to read to children at an early age. The AAP manual Guidelines for Health Supervision directs pediatricians to discuss using books and reading to children at many of the well-child visits from birth through age 3.

Accomplishment:

A session on the "Reach Out and Read" program was held at the AAP 1997 Annual Meeting in New Orleans to educate pediatricians on the promotion of reading. In addition, the Academy initiated development of a technical assistance packet to help pediatricians identify literacy development programs, free or low cost book suppliers, and recommended reading lists. Academy staff continues to provide information and referrals to pediatricians and others as a technical assistance service.

Commitment:

"As part of their commitment to America Reads, Scholastic Inc. and their partner First Book will fill the prescription of 200,000 new books through a partnership with pediatricians and health care professionals participating in Reach Out and Read and Born to Read programs.

In addition, for every \$100,000 raised in the support of Prescription for Reading, Scholastic will contribute an additional 5,000 books; for every \$500,000 contributed, an additional 35,000 books; and for every \$1 million, 100,000 new books."

*Snapshots from the Field (cont.)
(Mississippi State)*

Before the program was put into place, focus groups were conducted to ensure books would be an effective incentive for parents to bring their children in to get their shots. Health clinic clients are encouraged to take part in the process of reviewing titles and play an active role in the book selection process.

The program recently began its second year with an increase in state funding--up to \$350,000. The Mississippi Department of Health expects to serve up to 60,000 children throughout the state during the year. Every child who receives an immunization receives a RIF book and every child who enters a clinic is offered a book. To emphasize the link between a healthy and smart start for children, a video of Mrs. Pat Fordice, First Lady of Mississippi reading Itchy, Itchy Chicken Pox plays in the waiting rooms of the clinics.

The Mississippi Department of Education, Rotary, and the Governor's office provide volunteers for this statewide RIF program. Volunteers read with patients, share books and fun activities, and talk with parents about the importance of reading.

Accomplishment:

Scholastic and First Book together contributed 235,000 books to Reach Out and Read. These books were allocated as "book credits" to new ROR sites, allowing each health care center to select the books that were most appropriate for their population.

Accomplishment:

First Book initiated a system to provide books at the lowest possible cost and secured the participation of a dozen leading publishers.

Commitment:

"Random House Inc. will contribute 5,000 books a month for twelve months, totaling 60,000 new books to pediatric Reach Out and Read programs."

Accomplishment:

Random House delivered 60,000 high quality paperback and board books to ROR sites all across the country.

Commitment:

"The American Booksellers Association — through its 3,700 member bookstores across the country — will recruit 50,000 reading tutors and other volunteers for the America Reads Challenge, linking volunteers to health care professionals working with early reading and literacy programs. The recruitment drive will be launched at BookExpo America at the end of May. Additionally, any new children's books remaining following the BookExpo convention will be distributed through First Book to Reach Out and Read Programs."

Accomplishment:

With the concurrence of the other partners, the ABA did not recruit volunteers. Rather, it made available more than 200,000 free copies of the Rosemary Wells book, Read to Your Bunny, which dramatizes the importance of reading to children in a simple, colorful story. In addition, a literal "prescription" for reading to the child was given to parents at the time of the child's check-up. Plus it promoted the program through a beautiful poster distributed to bookstores.

Accomplishment:

The ABA contributed more than 5,000 books from its BookExpo convention to ROR programs.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

*Carla Morris, Children's Librarian
Provo Library,
Provo, Utah*

"The Born to Read program has had a major impact on our programming, circulation, and book selection. There is a real need for infant programming. We have seen our Book Babies class grow from just a few mothers and babies to up to 45 in each class. Our board books are always checked out. By providing this focus on our infant population, we send out a vital message: Reading to your infant is as important as daily food and care. It attacks illiteracy on the preventative end. It only takes a few minutes to read to your baby, but the benefits reaped as lifelong."

Commitment:

"The Association of American Publishers will provide the Reach Out and Read Training Manual and other ancillary materials used in ROR programs across the country. AAP is also making an initial contribution to help fund the start-up of a statewide Reach Out and Read initiative starting up in Texas."

Accomplishment:

The AAP continued to provide financial assistance to ROR for its training manual, related materials and the Texas launch. In addition, the AAP, under its new President, Pat Schroeder, took the lead in attempting to "crack the culture" and get across the message that from early infancy on, reading aloud to children is as important to their welfare as buckling them into car seats and providing good nutrition.

Accomplishment:

Working with the institute for Civil Society, a private non-profit foundation and think-tank, the AAP brought together a diverse group of individuals and organizations to explore a new "Designated Reader" initiative. Designed to encourage and empower adults to read to a child every day, the "Designated Reader" program will get its first public exposure at the 1998 BookExpo America in Chicago.

Commitment:

"Reading Is Fundamental, the nation's oldest and largest children's literacy organization, will reach nearly 4 million children this year ensuring that each receives at least three new books of their own. Among those served are many of the nation's youngest and neediest children in health clinics, immunization programs, hospitals, and Reach Out and Read programs."

Accomplishment:

With sponsorship from Visa, RIF created the "Reading Checkup Guide," which covers the six stages of early reading development and was designed to give parents practical information about helping their children grow up reading. The "Reading Checkup Guide" was endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which helped distribute more than 5 million copies through their membership.

Accomplishment:

With the sponsorship of Nestlé USA, Reading Is Fundamental created a library at MCV Hospital's Children's Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia. The library, located adjacent to the waiting room of the Randolph Minor Pediatric Group Practice, provides a comfortable place for families with children to read with and to their children.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Patty Reid, Bureau Director of Children's Health Services

"Young parents need all the help and encouragement they can get. Along with medical information and helps, the importance of nurturing a child with books and reading provides a nice balance. We see the surprised and pleased looks on the faces of new mothers as they go home from the hospital with their Born to Read packets."

Approximately 22,500 pediatric patients visit each year. Books are available for reading while waiting for appointments, and young children will be able to select books of their own to keep. The informal setting of the waiting room library provides a unique opportunity to model appropriate speaking and listening experiences important to literacy development. Volunteers are responsible for staffing the library, and they also hold regular story times. RIF and Nestlé dedicated the reading room to Arthur Ashe in appreciation for the legacy of love, courage and books he gave to America's children.

Accomplishment:

With Saban Entertainment and the "All New Captain Kangaroo," RIF encouraged the reading habit on posters featuring the Captain. The Captain, whom RIF named as its National Ambassador, reads a book to his audience on each episode of his televised show. The posters were distributed through the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Commitments:

"ABC Television will produce and air a special Children First public service announcement highlighting the importance of reading to children on a daily basis."

Accomplishment:

ABC has in fact produced two television spots, and ran in them for twice the normal rotations for public service spots.

Commitments:

"Mellon Trust in Boston has announced a \$100,000 grant to Reach Out and Read, and issues a challenge to other companies to match its \$100,000 contribution."

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has committed to a grant of \$150,000 to the Reach Out and Read National Training Center, bringing Casey's long term support to \$600,000. Original funding from the Casey Foundation was used to create the Reach Out and Read National Training Center to support the programs' expansion beyond Boston.

Irving Harris and the Harris Foundation of Chicago are committed to a minimum of \$100,000 in grants to initiate a city-wide implementation of a ROR program in Chicago by 2000.

The Dreyfus Corporation in New York City has announced a \$50,000 grant to Reach Out and Read for New York City programs.

Accomplishment:

All of these pledges were fulfilled, and as a result, there has been a major expansion in the number of Reach Out and Read sites.

Commitment:

"The National Association of Chain Drug Stores, and the National Community Pharmacists Association, representing the nation's nearly 60,000 community retail pharmacies, will distribute reading tips for parents and suggested book titles to parents coming to the pharmacy to obtain medicines for their children."

Accomplishment:

Unfortunately, this is the single opportunity that the Partnership was unable to act on in its first year. This powerful channel to reach and influence parents of young children will certainly be utilized in the year to come.

Looking Ahead

In its first year, the Prescription for Reading Partnership accomplished what few public-private initiatives ever achieve: a true synergy where the overall achievements exceeded the sum of the members' individual contributions. Continuing that collaboration and dedication to shared goals can lead to real changes in the levels of literacy.

The key question is: can this rate of cooperative effort be sustained?

Happily, the indicators are all positive:

- Reach Out and Read has 53 applications pending from hospitals and community health care centers to establish ROR sites that would reach another 150,000 children within the next three months.
- Applications for additional new ROR sites are expected to continue at a very aggressive pace, suggesting that at least 500,000 more children can be enrolled and served within the next 12 months. Large-scale expansions are underway in Alabama, Chicago, Los Angeles, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Seattle, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, and Westchester County, New York.
- 45 additional children's hospitals – members of NACHRI – have expressed interest in establishing a ROR program in the near future.
- In 1998, ROR training conferences will be conducted at NACHRI hospitals in New Haven, Birmingham, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Salt Lake City.
- ROR will be participating in the plenary sessions at the American Academy of Pediatrics annual meeting.
- The American Library Association's Born to Read program is included in the Florida Secretary of State's budget for the fiscal year beginning in October, 1998 for further state-wide expansion.
- Statewide expansion of the Born to Read program is also underway in Kentucky, Texas, New Jersey, and Connecticut.
- The ALA is working with Dr. Robert Needleman of ROR to support his research that documents the impact of both BTR and ROR programs.
- Born to Read training will be conducted at the ALA's National Institute in October 1998 in Indianapolis.
- A growth chart is being produced by the ALA, with recommended books for children from birth to age three, selected by the American Library Association/Children's Book Council Joint Committee.

- The importance of discussing parenting during pediatric visits will be included on the next edition of the American Academy of Pediatrics *Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care*.

- The Children's Book Council is working with the American Academy of Pediatrics on a two-phase project. Initially, CBC and AAP are exploring ways in which an expanded list of titles on the ALA-CBC Liaison Committee growth chart can be produced and given to members of AAP distribution to families during well-child visits. If this distribution is effective, the AAP and the CBC will initiate discussions with publishers and booksellers to make it possible for pediatricians to give a prescription to patients redeemable for a substantial discount at their local bookstore.

- Another major partnership involves Every Child A Reader, Inc., a non-profit agency initiated by The Children's Book Council, First Book, and the National School Supply and Equipment Association. These three organizations will collaborate in 1998 on a pilot project for a children's book distribution program. If, as anticipated, the pilot is successful, a children's book publishing industry-wide book distribution involving more than a million dollars worth of "remaindered" books will be launched nationally beginning early in 1999. National projects such as Reach Out and Read, the ALA's Born to Read program, PBS's Ready to Learn project, and First Book as well as state and community literacy groups and agencies serving children will be eligible for participation.

- In cooperation with the Institute for a Civil Society, the Association of American Publishers will sponsor a "Literacy Fair" on May 30 at BookExpo America in Chicago. In addition to celebrity guests, AAP and the Institute are inviting sponsors of "Read to Your Bunny," (ABA), "Read Across America" (the National Education Association), the Designated Reader initiative, "The Most Important 20 Minutes of the Day" (Association of Booksellers for Children), Reach Out and Read, and a host of other organizations with read-aloud initiatives to provide posters and informational materials for the Fair. BookExpo exhibitors and attending booksellers will be encouraged to walk through the Fair at lunchtime.

- ABC Television is exploring the development of new public service commercials that support reading to children, and ways to increase the frequency of those announcements on both the network and station affiliates.

• Recognizing that approximately 40% of the families served by Reach Out and Read programs do not speak English as their principal language — and yet the parents are being asked to read to their children— Scholastic is launching Multi-Lingual Books. Scholastic has translated four books — one board book and three picture books — into 10 different languages. (The original English “translation” appears on each page as well.) Working with R.R. Donnelley, Scholastic has developed a system to print these books digitally and on-demand, and thus keep the price of each book affordable. Boston’s Linguistic Systems Inc., which did the translations, contributed to the effort.

• 5,000 copies of the Scholastic Multi-Lingual Books are being contributed by Scholastic and R.R. Donnelley to the Partnership.

• Scholastic is also extending its grant and book challenge to Reach Out and Read. Scholastic will donate 50,000 books to ROR and continue the national challenge grant: for every \$100,000 they raise, Scholastic will contribute 5,000 more books.

• In addition, it will extend the challenge grant to the local level: for every \$5,000 raised locally, Scholastic will donate 500 books to that location.

Special Thanks to our Financial Supporters

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* *Continuing funding for a second year*

Prescription for Reading Partnership Members

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American Academy of Pediatrics Contact: Jackie Noyes	National Association of Chain Drug Stores Contact: Phillip Schneider
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Children's Book Council Contact: Paula Quint	Reading is Fundamental Contact: Jim Wendorf
First Book Contact: Christine Benero	Scholastic Inc. Contact: Steve Cohen

For additional copies of this report or more information about the partnership, call 617-534-5701.



**"Books are the on-ramp to the
information superhighway"**

*– Dr. Susan Roman ,
American Library Association*

The Prescription for Reading Partnership



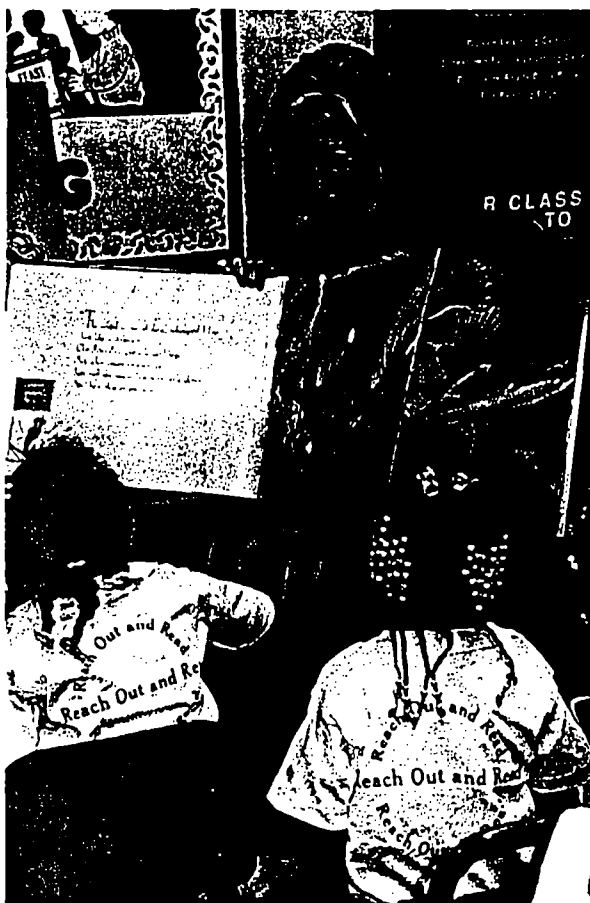
Annual Report
April 1998

The Prescription for Reading Partnership

On April 16, 1997, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton launched the *Prescription for Reading Partnership*. The Partnership is a public-private initiative that builds on and expands two proven literacy programs: *Reach Out and Read* (ROR) and the American Library Association's, *Born to Read*.

The Prescription for Reading Partnership has a single, critical goal: to use the reach and influence of doctors, health care professionals, and librarians – with the support of non-profit organizations, trade associations, corporations, and government agencies –

To foster early childhood learning and ensure that all children become successful readers.



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Highlights of the First Year

In the one year since the Partnership was launched:

2

- The number of children served by Reach Out and Read (ROR) – the 9 year old program where doctors are trained to integrate early childhood learning into children's healthcare, and then "prescribe" reading to parents when they bring children in for check-ups, and give them free books – increased from 150,000 to 750,000.
- More than one million books were given free to families by ROR doctors – each one accompanied by encouragement and suggestions on how to read together.
- The number of hospitals and community healthcare centers actively participating in the ROR program has increased from 80 to 213. Thanks to the leadership of the National Association of Community Health Centers and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, there are now ROR programs in 43 states.
- 4,500 physicians and nurse practitioners were trained in early literacy development.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recognized that reading and books were an integral part of a healthy childhood. They established the encouragement of literacy as a "standard of care" for all children, and are taking steps to integrate it into the residency training for all pediatricians.
- More than 235,000 new books were donated to ROR by Scholastic and its partner First Book. Another 60,000 books were donated by Random House. In addition, a system to provide books at the lowest possible cost was put into place by a consortium of leading publishers and First Book.
- The number of libraries participating in the American Library Association's (ALA) Born to Read program – a partnership between librarians and health care professionals who reach out to expectant parents, conveying the importance of having healthy babies who are developmentally ready to read– expanded from 5 to 309. Some 360,000 families in 25 states were reached by these programs.
- The American Booksellers Association distributed 200,000 free copies of *Read to Your Bunny* by Rosemary Wells to families through health care providers and bookstores.
- 5 million copies of a "Reading Checkup Guide" were prepared by Reading is Fundamental (RIF) with support from Visa, and distributed to parents via pediatricians and the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- A public service TV ad campaign promoting reading to young children ran on ABC television stations.
- A multi-lingual book publishing program was developed by Scholastic and the R.R. Donnelley Company. These children's books – published in 10 different languages, each with the English translation on the same page – will serve the millions of families whose native language is not English.
- The Association of American Publishers continued its financial support to ROR, and developed an advertising and promotional campaign called "Designated Reader" designed to spur more reading to children.
- A number of foundations not only fulfilled their generous financial commitments to ROR, but expanded them.

Snapshots from the Field

Children's Hospital,
Oakland, CA

One of the attending pediatricians shared this anecdote about the impact of the Reach Out and Read program. "I was in the clinic today and the kids said, 'Yes!' and jumped up and down when they heard they got a book! "

They were so excited! And I thought how nice, that they associate getting a book with coming to the doctor. I think that the program is really catching on! How nice that they relate coming to the doctor in a positive light, versus being a scary experience."

"Wakanayeja Yawapi"
(*"Children Read" in Lakota Sioux*)
Rosebud, SD
Lucy Reifel, MD

Dr. Reifel, the lone pediatrician, loads her van with medical supplies and children's books prior to conducting well-child visits at community centers and halls throughout the Rosebud Reservation. Due to the highest teenage pregnancy rate in the state, Dr. Reifel stresses the importance of reading to teenage mothers. Not only does she distribute the books; she is often the only volunteer reader. There are no libraries or bookstores on the reservation, so her efforts are especially appreciated.

The Prescription for Reading Partnership

Background

When First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton first convened a meeting of "interested parties" in the winter of 1997, the topic of doctors being trained in early childhood learning and reading had not yet entered the public's collective consciousness. But for the dozen or so representatives from healthcare organizations, the American Library Association, foundations, and trade associations, the First Lady's spotlight on the issue reinforced what they knew to be true, and what was soon recognized as a critical opportunity.

That recognition was based on the growing scientific evidence of the importance of parents regularly reading to their children from as early as six months of age. And it was based on the 8 years of clinical evidence about the influential role healthcare professionals – pediatricians, nurses, and others – could provide by "prescribing" reading to mothers when they brought their young children in for check-ups.

Since 1989, when a team of pediatricians and early childhood educators from Boston City Hospital collaborated to create a program that integrated the encouragement of early literacy into standard pediatric health care, the evidence of that involvement has become apparent. Parents who participated in Reach Out and Read programs are up to 8 times more likely to read to their children than parents who have not been exposed to this pediatric influence.

Similarly, there is a noticeable, positive impact on parents who have been exposed to books and reading through the American Library Association's Born to Read program – which reaches out even earlier, to mothers-to-be. Since 1995, the ALA's five Born to Read demonstration sites have shown that the integration of pediatric care, literacy outreach and books can make a difference in preparing children to be successful readers.

In March, 1997, recognizing the underlying support from key pediatricians, early childhood educators, and literacy advocates for the concept of pediatric involvement in literacy – and aware that the upcoming White House "Brain Conference" would generate greater public understanding – the First Lady's Office convened one more meeting.

But this time something more than just an enhanced awareness of the problem – and a recognition of some interesting, successful, but isolated initiatives – emerged.

Snapshots from the Field (Contd)

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

"I have a family in my clinic whose mother has exceptionally poor control of her five and a half year old twins. Although it rarely happens with other families in my clinic, Jasmine routinely ends up in time-out during her visits. That day was one of the worst: 4 five minute time-outs! When I asked her what the matter was, she said that she couldn't find her book. I said that she could take home any (used) book that she wanted. She said, "But I want the book YOU gave me." I was touched that my involvement was so important to her.

The most important thing that ROR has done for us is the First Book partnership. By making it possible to purchase books cheaply, ROR-Boston and First Book have functionally raised thousand of dollars for us. The more books we buy, the more money we don't have to raise. I am grateful on a daily basis for this alliance."

Responding to Mrs. Clinton's challenge to make something happen, a loose amalgamation of health care professionals, literacy advocates, and trade association representatives coalesced into a focused, coordinated task force: the Prescription for Reading Partnership was born.

On April 16, 1997, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, the First Lady launched the Partnership, discussed its goals, and announced the initial commitments from the partners. These commitments formed the basis of the last year's accomplishments discussed in this first Annual Report.

Mission and Goals

The mission of the Partnership is to ensure that:

- We create a nation of readers.
- We support at-risk parents in their role as the child's first teacher.
- Every child has the opportunity for healthy brain development through early stimulation of language and listening skills.
- Every child develops a love of reading as the basis for lifelong learning.
- We meet the America Reads Challenge of having every child read on level by the end of third grade.
- We break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty allowing all children to achieve their dreams.

The goals of the Partnership are to ensure that by the year 2000:

- Reading and books will be recognized as an integral part of a healthy childhood, and the encouragement of emergent literacy will be formally integrated into the pediatric "standard of care" for all children, and into the residency training of all pediatricians.
- Expectant parents will be apprised of tips for "raising a reader" through pre-natal clinics.
- Every child under the age of six will receive a "prescription for daily reading" from every pediatrician during every well-child check-up. That prescription will reinforce parents' daily reading to children, the importance of helping children grow up with books, and will be accompanied by advice and support from the doctor about ways to stimulate a child's healthy growth and development.

Snapshots from the Field (Contd)

**The University of Kansas Medical Center
Kansas City, KS
Virginia L. Tucker, MD**

"I would like to express my appreciation for the book that became available for David, a 2 year old young man who was seen in my General Clinic on May 21, 1997 for his Kan-Be-Healthy physical examination. David came with his 4 year old sister, 6 month old brother, and both parents. The book David received was the one with pictures of animals. Immediately, David's sister pounced on it, saw the pictures and asked her mother what the words were. She then, knowing the names of the animals, said "This is a____" and told him the name of the animal, its color and where it lived. They must have gone through the book a half-dozen times or more, before he finished his clinic visit. He was particularly pleased that the book belonged to him and not to his sister. At the close of the interview and the physical, the mother stopped me to say that they were most appreciative for the book. As their Pediatrician, I wanted to express my appreciation to you and others who made this possible for David.

Another physician reports:

"A very difficult-to-examine 12 month old was given a book at the start of the exam. The baby was thrilled and I was able to do my exam while he looked at the book without difficulties. Also, an 18 month old was thrilled to receive a new book, but 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 pictures and she has now enrolled in a learn-to-read program."

- All children – and parents – will have access to books via local libraries, and will be encouraged to get a library card. In addition, librarians will provide tips on reading, and offer select lists of developmentally appropriate titles.

- The 6 million most at-risk children will receive free books in pre-natal clinics and from pediatricians during every well-child check-up.

Why This Initiative

The scientific evidence is now clear and compelling: babies' brains are not "prewired" before birth; brain growth in the early years is very rapid and can be stimulated by reading.

Like their physical development, which requires nurturing, human brains also need food to grow – stimulation from parents and caregivers. We know that brain growth during the early years is very rapid and has a profound impact on a child's healthy development and school readiness. Not surprisingly, we also know that reading to children can be one of the most important actions a parent can take to stimulate a child's learning capacity.

The Need

Unfortunately, far too many parents are unaware of the tremendous opportunity that reading on a regular basis to their young children can provide. According to "Starting Points," the 1994 report of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, fewer than half of American parents read to their infants and toddlers on a regular basis.

This tendency is most concentrated among families with lower incomes, thereby increasing the risk of illiteracy, failure in school, drug and welfare dependency. But the problem of parents not reading to children crosses the entire socio-economic spectrum, with researchers estimating that several million children under the age of six are not read to on a regular basis.

With a quarter of all children being born into homes below the poverty level, there are nearly 1 million newborns – and almost 6 million children under the age of 6 – who are most at-risk.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Fair Haven Community Health Center
Fair Haven, CT
Laurel B. Shader, MD, FAAP

"A critical component of the Fair Haven ROR program is the Story Corner in the waiting area, where community volunteers read stories to children of all ages and coach parents in reading aloud to their own kids. The new and "gently used" books that fill the shelves in the Story Corner are donated by individuals, schools, book stores, and religious and civic organizations. Children are invited and encouraged to take home any book they like -- more than 25,000 books have gone home so far. The Story Corner has completely changed Fair Haven's waiting-room environment for the better.

The health care and education of our children are inextricably linked. Children raised in an unstable environment, without a loving caretaker, without a medical home, without proper nutrition, start their school lives at a clear disadvantage. The forum for educating our families is as diverse as the families themselves. We reach out to families in our exam rooms and waiting areas, in child care settings, and the neighborhood library. We hope to cut through the barriers to literacy and create a population of children who reach school age healthy, safe, and ready to learn. We would like all of our children to walk down the hallways of the health center asking 'Can I have a book today?' And for all of their parents to be able to say: 'That last book you gave her -- oh, she loved it, we read it a hundred times!'

The Opportunity

There is now a very real opportunity to break this pattern of inadequate reading and to establish a new pattern: a pattern of more parents reading regularly to children.

This opportunity is based on several proven and promising programs developed by doctors and early childhood experts, and focuses on early intervention by pediatricians, other health care professionals, and librarians.

Pediatricians have a strong and trusting relationship with parents of young children. Indeed that relationship takes the form of "anticipatory guidance," wherein the doctor prescribes appropriate, healthy behavior, and the parent expects -- and often acts on -- it. One key component of the Prescription for Reading Partnership is the establishment of a formal link between anticipatory guidance and reading as a medical "standard of appropriate care."

Simply put, just as immunizations, a healthy diet, and child safety are standards of care, reading must become a standard of care.

The Strategy

The Partnership identified 4 key elements necessary to achieve its goals:

- Adequately trained and motivated doctors and librarians.
- Health care sites where reading will be prescribed and books distributed.
- Appropriate books for children.
- Creative, compelling messages that reach the target audience where they are-- watching TV, movies, listening to radio, shopping in stores-- and help motivate them to read to their children regularly.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Hasbro Children's Hospital Providence RI

As the children come through the double, metal doors and into the pediatric primary care center, it's not hard to tell which ones know about the RIF reading program here at Hasbro Children's Hospital. They're the ones hollering, "We're going to read today!"

"Reading at home is rare to nonexistent for these children," says the program's coordinator. "There are few books available at home, due to financial constraints." The Hasbro program primarily serves preschool children from an urban, low-income population that is multicultural and multilingual.

A one-year-old girl and her three-year-old brother arrive with their mother. They're just removing their coats when a college-age RIF volunteer approaches them, book in hand. He explains to the mother that he's about to start reading to a few children already gathered.

A few minutes later, both mother and children are listening to the story. The walls around them display colorful posters and, on a table, there are leaflets about family reading to take home. When the children are called into the examination room, it turns out the doctor has something to say about reading, too. She talks to the mother about the importance of reading aloud to young children, particularly to enhance their language development. Then, when the exam's finished, she guides the family to a big batch of RIF books and explains that the children can each choose one. They're delighted!

Commitments vs. Accomplishments

When the Partnership was launched on April 16, 1997, a list of commitments from the partners was announced. The "delivery" on these promises was significant and encouraging:

Commitment:

"The Reach Out and Read National Training Center at Boston Medical Center will train 10,000 pediatricians and pediatric residents by the year 2000 to implement Reach Out and Read programs in their local communities."

Accomplishment:

Reach Out and Read trained over 4,500 pediatricians and nurse practitioners in early literacy development, putting it well on its way to its goal of 10,000.

Commitment:

"The National Association of Community Health Centers' 950 member health centers will implement Reach Out and Read programs reaching one million parents and children by the year 2000; and

Commitment:

The National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions will challenge its 150 member hospitals to serve as training sites for Reach Out and Read programs, and is setting a goal of tripling the number of early reading programs currently operating in children's hospitals across the country by the year 2000. NACHRI will also disseminate information through its children's hospital members to parents about the importance of daily reading."

Accomplishment:

Reach Out and Read, working with the National Association of Community Health Centers and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions successfully increased the number of health care sites from 80 to 213. As a result, the number of children served by ROR-trained doctors increased from 150,000 to over 750,000.

Accomplishment:

NACHRI's summer 1997 edition of Children's Hospitals Today magazine carried an article promoting early reading programs to its readership of children's hospital CEO's administrators, trustees, clinicians, and community supporters.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)
(Hasbro Children's Hospital)

Back in the waiting room, the RIF volunteer admires the three year old's new book, and talks with the child's mother, who is surprised to learn that the public library has free "storytime" hours when librarians read books aloud to young children. She wasn't sure that the library was free. Maybe she and the kids will go to the preschool reading hour next week.

With coats back on and books clutched tightly in hand, the children and their mom say goodbye.

Note: The RIF program at Hasbro continues to grow. Today, more than 150 volunteers are involved and over 14,000 books are distributed annually, thanks to increased funding from Abbott Laboratories, Billy Andrade Children's Charities, and golfer Brad Faxon. Dr. Pamela High, M.D. works with a hospital-based committee to coordinate the program. library was free. Maybe she and the kids will go to the preschool reading hour next week.

Accomplishment:

A special NACHRI publication, "Healthy Children in Healthy Families," featured a nuts and bolts article on how to establish a ROR program at a children's hospital. This publication was sent to community education directors, child advocacy directors and clinicians at children's hospitals nationwide.

Accomplishment:

NACHRI's consumer newsletter for parents, Starting Out Healthy, brought the message of the importance of early reading to more than 400,000 parents.

Commitment:

"The American Library Association will work with the nation's 16,000 public libraries to establish Born to Read programs, promoting partnerships between librarians and health care professionals teaching the critical importance of reading and preschool learning to parents of the 4 million babies born each year."

Accomplishment:

The ALA made Born to Read an overall priority of the Association. The program was heavily promoted to its members, and it received significant press coverage in both American Libraries – the ALA's own official journal and in School Library Journal, where it was a cover story in July. As a result, the number of Born to Read sites increased from the original 5 demonstration projects to 309. Some 360,000 families in 25 states are currently reached by these Born to Read programs.

Accomplishment:

Born to Read received Federal funding for expansion in the state of Florida. Ten training teams worked throughout the state not only to expand Born to Read, but also to coordinate efforts with Reach Out and Read, thereby enhancing both the quantity and quality of service to families.

Accomplishment:

To further the coordination of the BTR and ROR programs, Dr. Robert Needleman, one of the founders of ROR participated in a program at the Public Library Association National Conference in Kansas City. At the same conference, Dr. Wendy Turnbull and Helma Hawkins from the Kansas City area talked about the success of the BTR project developed locally. More than 150 librarians from across the country were in attendance, most of who have requested further information about both programs.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Mississippi State Department of Health Immunization Program

When the Mississippi State Department of Health decided to provide some sort of incentive for parents to bring their children for their initial and follow-up shots as well as WIC certification, they considered t-shirts or tote bags as opposed to the historic candy incentive before they hit on a book. To Mississippi Department of Health officials, literacy and health are a natural partnership in the developmental life of the children.

Under the name "Healthy Start/Smart Start," the Mississippi State Department of Health Immunization Program began a partnership with Reading Is Fundamental. The goal is to provide books to children during their two, six and 12 month immunization visits at all 110 Mississippi State Department of Health clinic sites. Children served also include older children who come for immunizations or come with younger siblings. Virtually any child who comes to a clinic can choose a book as part of the program.

Mississippi, which has the lowest per capita income in the nation, the highest teen pregnancy rate, the highest school drop out rate, the lowest literacy level, and one of the highest infant mortality rates, also has one of the most active and accessible public health systems. The MSDH provides at least 85% of all childhood immunizations and prenatal care in the state. Because clinics are located statewide and can be found in especially rural areas, the program is reaching the neediest of Mississippi's children. Most health clinic patients have little or no money to purchase books. Many are unaware of the importance of reading to children at an early age and its link to success in school.

Commitment:

The American Academy of Pediatrics will provide its 53,000 members with a specially designed prescription pad to promote daily reading and age-appropriate activities to stimulate a child's early learning. It will also distribute to its membership checklists for parents and developmental milestones so that they can measure their child's growth and development.

Accomplishment:

The Academy has undertaken activities to: Formalize the Academy's support of reading initiatives and ensure an internal structure to address them. The charge to the AAP Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption and Dependent Care was expanded to include development and oversight of programs that promote reading.

Accomplishment:

The Academy also took steps to ensure that all relevant AAP policies and programs identify and promote the need to read to children at an early age. The AAP manual Guidelines for Health Supervision directs pediatricians to discuss using books and reading to children at many of the well-child visits from birth through age 3.

Accomplishment:

A session on the "Reach Out and Read" program was held at the AAP 1997 Annual Meeting in New Orleans to educate pediatricians on the promotion of reading. In addition, the Academy initiated development of a technical assistance packet to help pediatricians identify literacy development programs, free or low cost book suppliers, and recommended reading lists. Academy staff continues to provide information and referrals to pediatricians and others as a technical assistance service.

Commitment:

"As part of their commitment to America Reads, Scholastic Inc. and their partner First Book will fill the prescription of 200,000 new books through a partnership with pediatricians and health care professionals participating in Reach Out and Read and Born to Read programs.

In addition, for every \$100,000 raised in the support of Prescription for Reading, Scholastic will contribute an additional 5,000 books; for every \$500,000 contributed, an additional 35,000 books; and for every \$1 million, 100,000 new books."

**Snapshots from the Field (cont.)
(Mississippi State)**

Before the program was put into place, focus groups were conducted to ensure books would be an effective incentive for parents to bring their children in to get their shots. Health clinic clients are encouraged to take part in the process of reviewing titles and play an active role in the book selection process.

The program recently began its second year with an increase in state funding--up to \$350,000. The Mississippi Department of Health expects to serve up to 60,000 children throughout the state during the year. Every child who receives an immunization receives a RIF book and every child who enters a clinic is offered a book. To emphasize the link between a healthy and smart start for children, a video of Mrs. Pat Fordice, First Lady of Mississippi reading Itchy, Itchy Chicken Pox plays in the waiting rooms of the clinics.

The Mississippi Department of Education, Rotary, and the Governor's office provide volunteers for this statewide RIF program. Volunteers read with patients, share books and fun activities, and talk with parents about the importance of reading.

Accomplishment:

Scholastic and First Book together contributed 235,000 books to Reach Out and Read. These books were allocated as "book credits" to new ROR sites, allowing each health care center to select the books that were most appropriate for their population.

Accomplishment:

First Book initiated a system to provide books at the lowest possible cost and secured the participation of a dozen leading publishers.

Commitment:

"Random House Inc. will contribute 5,000 books a month for twelve months, totaling 60,000 new books to pediatric Reach Out and Read programs."

Accomplishment:

Random House delivered 60,000 high quality paperback and board books to ROR sites all across the country.

Commitment:

"The American Booksellers Association — through its 3,700 member bookstores across the country — will recruit 50,000 reading tutors and other volunteers for the America Reads Challenge, linking volunteers to health care professionals working with early reading and literacy programs. The recruitment drive will be launched at BookExpo America at the end of May. Additionally, any new children's books remaining following the BookExpo convention will be distributed through First Book to Reach Out and Read Programs."

Accomplishment:

With the concurrence of the other partners, the ABA did not recruit volunteers. Rather, it made available more than 200,000 free copies of the Rosemary Wells book, Read to Your Bunny, which dramatizes the importance of reading to children in a simple, colorful story. In addition, a literal "prescription" for reading to the child was given to parents at the time of the child's check-up. Plus it promoted the program through a beautiful poster distributed to bookstores.

Accomplishment:

The ABA contributed more than 5,000 books from its BookExpo convention to ROR programs.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

*Carla Morris, Children's Librarian
Provo Library,
Provo, Utah*

"The Born to Read program has had a major impact on our programming, circulation, and book selection. There is a real need for infant programming. We have seen our Book Babies class grow from just a few mothers and babies to up to 45 in each class. Our board books are always checked out. By providing this focus on our infant population, we send out a vital message: Reading to your infant is as important as daily food and care. It attacks illiteracy on the preventative end. It only takes a few minutes to read to your baby, but the benefits reaped as lifelong."

Commitment:

"The Association of American Publishers will provide the Reach Out and Read Training Manual and other ancillary materials used in ROR programs across the country. AAP is also making an initial contribution to help fund the start-up of a statewide Reach Out and Read initiative starting up in Texas."

Accomplishment:

The AAP continued to provide financial assistance to ROR for its training manual, related materials and the Texas launch. In addition, the AAP, under its new President, Pat Schroeder, took the lead in attempting to "crack the culture" and get across the message that from early infancy on, reading aloud to children is as important to their welfare as buckling them into car seats and providing good nutrition.

Accomplishment:

Working with the institute for Civil Society, a private non-profit foundation and think-tank, the AAP brought together a diverse group of individuals and organizations to explore a new "Designated Reader" initiative. Designed to encourage and empower adults to read to a child every day, the "Designated Reader" program will get its first public exposure at the 1998 BookExpo America in Chicago.

Commitment:

"Reading Is Fundamental, the nation's oldest and largest children's literacy organization, will reach nearly 4 million children this year ensuring that each receives at least three new books of their own. Among those served are many of the nation's youngest and neediest children in health clinics, immunization programs, hospitals, and Reach Out and Read programs."

Accomplishment:

With sponsorship from Visa, RIF created the "Reading Checkup Guide," which covers the six stages of early reading development and was designed to give parents practical information about helping their children grow up reading. The "Reading Checkup Guide" was endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which helped distribute more than 5 million copies through their membership.

Accomplishment:

With the sponsorship of Nestlé USA, Reading Is Fundamental created a library at MCV Hospital's Children's Medical Center in Richmond, Virginia. The library, located adjacent to the waiting room of the Randolph Minor Pediatric Group Practice, provides a comfortable place for families with children to read with and to their children.

Snapshots from the Field (cont.)

Patty Reid, Bureau Director of Children's Health Services

"Young parents need all the help and encouragement they can get. Along with medical information and helps, the importance of nurturing a child with books and reading provides a nice balance. We see the surprised and pleased looks on the faces of new mothers as they go home from the hospital with their Born to Read packets."

Approximately 22,500 pediatric patients visit each year. Books are available for reading while waiting for appointments, and young children will be able to select books of their own to keep. The informal setting of the waiting room library provides a unique opportunity to model appropriate speaking and listening experiences important to literacy development. Volunteers are responsible for staffing the library, and they also hold regular story times. RIF and Nestlé dedicated the reading room to Arthur Ashe in appreciation for the legacy of love, courage and books he gave to America's children.

Accomplishment:

With Saban Entertainment and the "All New Captain Kangaroo," RIF encouraged the reading habit on posters featuring the Captain. The Captain, whom RIF named as its National Ambassador, reads a book to his audience on each episode of his televised show. The posters were distributed through the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Commitments:

"ABC Television will produce and air a special Children First public service announcement highlighting the importance of reading to children on a daily basis."

Accomplishment:

ABC has in fact produced two television spots, and ran in them for twice the normal rotations for public service spots.

Commitments:

"Mellon Trust in Boston has announced a \$100,000 grant to Reach Out and Read, and issues a challenge to other companies to match its \$100,000 contribution."

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has committed to a grant of \$150,000 to the Reach Out and Read National Training Center, bringing Casey's long term support to \$600,000. Original funding from the Casey Foundation was used to create the Reach Out and Read National Training Center to support the programs' expansion beyond Boston.

Irving Harris and the Harris Foundation of Chicago are committed to a minimum of \$100,000 in grants to initiate a city-wide implementation of a ROR program in Chicago by 2000.

The Dreyfus Corporation in New York City has announced a \$50,000 grant to Reach Out and Read for New York City programs.

Accomplishment:

All of these pledges were fulfilled, and as a result, there has been a major expansion in the number of Reach Out and Read sites.

Commitment:

"The National Association of Chain Drug Stores, and the National Community Pharmacists Association, representing the nation's nearly 60,000 community retail pharmacies, will distribute reading tips for parents and suggested book titles to parents coming to the pharmacy to obtain medicines for their children."

Accomplishment:

Unfortunately, this is the single opportunity that the Partnership was unable to act on in its first year. This powerful channel to reach and influence parents of young children will certainly be utilized in the year to come.

Looking Ahead

In its first year, the Prescription for Reading Partnership accomplished what few public-private initiatives ever achieve: a true synergy where the overall achievements exceeded the sum of the members' individual contributions. Continuing that collaboration and dedication to shared goals can lead to real changes in the levels of literacy.

The key question is: can this rate of cooperative effort be sustained?

Happily, the indicators are all positive:

- Reach Out and Read has 53 applications pending from hospitals and community health care centers to establish ROR sites that would reach another 150,000 children within the next three months.
- Applications for additional new ROR sites are expected to continue at a very aggressive pace, suggesting that at least 500,000 more children can be enrolled and served within the next 12 months. Large-scale expansions are underway in Alabama, Chicago, Los Angeles, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Seattle, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, and Westchester County, New York.
- 45 additional children's hospitals – members of NACHRI – have expressed interest in establishing a ROR program in the near future.
- In 1998, ROR training conferences will be conducted at NACHRI hospitals in New Haven, Birmingham, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Salt Lake City.
- ROR will be participating in the plenary sessions at the American Academy of Pediatrics annual meeting.
- The American Library Association's Born to Read program is included in the Florida Secretary of State's budget for the fiscal year beginning in October, 1998 for further state-wide expansion.
- Statewide expansion of the Born to Read program is also underway in Kentucky, Texas, New Jersey, and Connecticut.
- The ALA is working with Dr. Robert Needleman of ROR to support his research that documents the impact of both BTR and ROR programs.
- Born to Read training will be conducted at the ALA's National Institute in October 1998 in Indianapolis.
- A growth chart is being produced by the ALA, with recommended books for children from birth to age three, selected by the American Library Association/Children's Book Council Joint Committee.

- The importance of discussing parenting during pediatric visits will be included on the next edition of the American Academy of Pediatrics *Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care*.
- The Children's Book Council is working with the American Academy of Pediatrics on a two-phase project. Initially, CBC and AAP are exploring ways in which an expanded list of titles on the ALA-CBC Liaison Committee growth chart can be produced and given to members of AAP distribution to families during well-child visits. If this distribution is effective, the AAP and the CBC will initiate discussions with publishers and booksellers to make it possible for pediatricians to give a prescription to patients redeemable for a substantial discount at their local bookstore.
- Another major partnership involves Every Child A Reader, Inc., a non-profit agency initiated by The Children's Book Council, First Book, and the National School Supply and Equipment Association. These three organizations will collaborate in 1998 on a pilot project for a children's book distribution program. If, as anticipated, the pilot is successful, a children's book publishing industry-wide book distribution involving more than a million dollars worth of "remaindered" books will be launched nationally beginning early in 1999. National projects such as Reach Out and Read, the ALA's Born to Read program, PBS's Ready to Learn project, and First Book as well as state and community literacy groups and agencies serving children will be eligible for participation.
- In cooperation with the Institute for a Civil Society, the Association of American Publishers will sponsor a "Literacy Fair" on May 30 at BookExpo America in Chicago. In addition to celebrity guests, AAP and the Institute are inviting sponsors of "Read to Your Bunny," (ABA), "Read Across America" (the National Education Association), the Designated Reader initiative, "The Most Important 20 Minutes of the Day" (Association of Booksellers for Children), Reach Out and Read, and a host of other organizations with read-aloud initiatives to provide posters and informational materials for the Fair. BookExpo exhibitors and attending booksellers will be encouraged to walk through the Fair at lunchtime.
- ABC Television is exploring the development of new public service commercials that support reading to children, and ways to increase the frequency of those announcements on both the network and station affiliates.

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- Recognizing that approximately 40% of the families served by Reach Out and Read programs do not speak English as their principal language — and yet the parents are being asked to read to their children— Scholastic is launching Multi-Lingual Books. Scholastic has translated four books — one board book and three picture books — into 10 different languages. (The original English “translation” appears on each page as well.) Working with R.R. Donnelley, Scholastic has developed a system to print these books digitally and on-demand, and thus keep the price of each book affordable. Boston’s Linguistic Systems Inc., which did the translations, contributed to the effort.
 - 5,000 copies of the Scholastic Multi-Lingual Books are being contributed by Scholastic and R.R. Donnelley to the Partnership.
 - Scholastic is also extending its grant and book challenge to Reach Out and Read. Scholastic will donate 50,000 books to ROR and continue the national challenge grant: for every \$100,000 they raise, Scholastic will contribute 5,000 more books.
 - In addition, it will extend the challenge grant to the local level: for every \$5,000 raised locally, Scholastic will donate 500 books to that location.

Special Thanks to our Financial Supporters

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** Continuing funding for a second year*

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For additional copies of this report or more information about the partnership, call 617-534-5701.



**"Books are the on-ramp to the
information superhighway"**

*– Dr. Susan Roman ,
American Library Association*