

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REACH OUT AND READ 10TH ANNIVERSARY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
JUNE 4, 1999

I am so pleased to be here – and to be part of this extraordinary birthday celebration. Thank you, Barry, for that generous introduction. But it is I who should thank all of you – for the work you have done – and that we have done together – to make Reach Out and Read such a remarkably successful program that has touched so many lives. I want to thank Aneesha for sharing her story with us today.

There are so many people who have worked tirelessly over the past ten years to make this day possible. And they all deserve our deepest appreciation. I want to thank Elaine Ullian – the president and CEO of Boston Medical Center – who has been so supportive of this effort – and who has been kind enough to host this event today. None of us, of course, would be here if it weren't for Barry Zuckerman – who I've known and admired for a number of years – and whose brainchild we celebrate today. Who would have imagined ten years ago that this simple idea – that parents should be encouraged to read to their babies and toddlers – would spark a national movement?

We are also deeply indebted to “Perri” Klass – for working so tirelessly to make this program a reality in the lives of so many children and parents. A practicing pediatrician; a mother of 3; a novelist; journalist; book reviewer and world traveler, Perry epitomizes the saying, “if you want to get something done – give it to a busy person.”

I also want to say how pleased I am that so many elected officials, community leaders, parents, and children have joined us today. I’m so pleased that Speaker of the House Representative Thomas Finneran is with us – and I want to congratulate him for the progress he’s made in the state legislature in supporting Reach Out and Read.

Like all of you -- I’ve been looking forward to coming to this party for a long time. In fact, one of the reasons I have loved being involved in Reach Out and Read has been because I’ve had the chance to meet such interesting and fun characters. Where else could I meet Curious George, or Arthur the Aardvark, than here, at a Reach out and Read party?

Last year, I met one of my favorite characters -- the Cat in the Hat – at a Prescription for Reading event in Maryland. Back in January of 1997, when I first helped launch this program, I went with Maurice Sendak to Georgetown Medical Center – and listened to him read “Where the Wild Things Are” to the children. Believe me, it was as much of a treat to me as it was for them. And this Spring – we made reading a part of the historic White House Easter Egg roll – handing out prescriptions for books to children and their parents – which they could “fill” right there on the south lawn – with donated books.

But I think the best part has been all the wonderful children I’ve met over the past few years, as I’ve traveled around the country to help launch new programs – or celebrate existing ones. I’ve seen the excitement in their eyes, when they’re handed their first book. And I’ve seen how listening to their mother or father reading to them has given them a real love for books, and a real jump start in being able to read themselves.

As we blow out the candles on this 10th year birthday cake -
- I can't help but look back for a moment, and think about how this whole story began. How we took a simple creative idea – that reading regularly to infants and toddlers is as important to their well being as regular checkups – and made it a reality in communities across the country. And I think you should all take great pride in the progress you've made, and the lives you've touched.

It was no coincidence that I helped launch Prescription for Reading at the same time we were holding a White House Conference on the Early Childhood Development and Learning. Because science and research have shown us the extraordinary connection between reading to a child and that child's emotional and intellectual development. We know that a baby's brain is a work in progress. And what we learned at the that conference was that reading to a child is not only a wonderful way to share time together. It literally helps the baby's brain to grow and develop.

Two years ago, when I called for the Prescription for Reading national effort, I knew that Reach Out and Read would be one of our most important partners. And it's been so gratifying to see so many private partners step up to the plate over the past few years – from publishers and hospitals to booksellers and corporations. And the results of these partnerships have been remarkable. You've distributed more than 3 million books to nearly 1 million children across the country. Now that's definitely worth holding a birthday party to celebrate.

Today, I am very pleased to announce a remarkable number of new commitments to Reach Out and Read in honor of this 10th anniversary celebration. Scholastic Inc. will donate 100,000 books over the next year and extend its challenge grant to give 5,000 books for every \$100,000 that the program raises. Houghton-Mifflin Publishers and Candlewick Publishers have also pledged special commitments.

CVS/Pharmacy is stepping up to the plate – with a donation of \$250,000 to support local and national Reach Out and Read efforts in eight states and the District of Columbia. And the Cordelia Corporation is pledging a gift of \$300,000 to support continued expansion of the program nationwide – and \$50,000 in books for the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York.

The medical community is also providing vital support. The Pfizer Pediatric Health Corporation pledged to expand its commitment to Reach Out and Read – and support its very first national conference. And finally, 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.

Today, we have so much to celebrate. The vision that Barry had 10 years ago to encourage parents to begin reading to their children at an early age. The books that are now lining the shelves in children's rooms across the country. The sheer joy of reading that parents and their children have discovered. All as a result of this program. But as much progress as we've made – we know there is always more to do.

As many of you know, I've spent a lot of time over the past few years thinking about how we can meaningfully mark the turn of the calendar, as we end one century – and begin a new millennium. We've chosen as our theme "Honor the past, imagine the future." And the President has asked all Americans to think how to preserve the common values that bind us all together as human beings – and what gifts we want to bring with us into the 21st century.

Today, let's dedicate ourselves to making sure that this program -- that we all value so highly -- continues to thrive and grow in the years ahead. And for a moment -- let's imagine a future in which we could reach out to all of America's children. So that no matter what neighborhood they live in -- or what their circumstances -- they would have a chance to grow up ready to learn -- and be able to reach their fullest, God-given potential. What a remarkable gift to the future that would be -- for our children, and for our nation.

I want to thank everyone here today for all that you've done -- and all that you will continue to do -- to help us reach that day.

Thank you.

FINISHED TRANSCRIBING – NEEDS TO BE EDITED

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REACH OUT AND READ 10TH ANNIVERSARY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

JUNE 4, 1999

Thank you. I am absolutely delighted to be here. I'm happy to see this beautiful atrium filled with people who are committed to children's health and well-being and to see so many beautiful children here as well, as a great reminder of what is most important and what we all should care about.

I want to thank Barry for that generous introduction but it really is all of us who should be recognizing your leadership, Barry, and everything you have done to conceive of and then make successful Reach Out and Read, which has touched so many lives.

I'm also very pleased to be here with people who have worked tirelessly over the last 10 years to make this birthday celebration possible. I want to thank the Boston Medical Center and your chief executive officer and president, Elaine Ullian, who has been so supportive of this effort. I know, Elaine, that you have a great personal dedication to healthcare and providing quality healthcare to all people, and so it's a pleasure to be here with you as well.

We're also deeply indebted to Perri Klass for her tireless work on behalf of children, for sharing her many talents, particularly her writing talent, so that the others of us who are not on the inside actually delivering care as she is, can have some idea of what the life of a practicing pediatrician is. Also we get insights into her work as a mother of three, and a novelist, journalist, book reviewer, world traveler, and in addition one of the moving forces behind Reach Out and Read.

We're also very pleased to have a representative of the parents and I think that the response to Mrs. Abdulla's remarks from the audience is an indication of how supportive we all are of parents who are reaching out and reading to their children and I was in the fortunate position, sitting here on the stage and being able to see her husband and three beautiful children sitting in the front row with a stack of books, which should be an advertising picture for Reach Out and Read.

We're also very blessed to have with us elected officials who care deeply about the future of children, and I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very grateful for the gifts of the books and honored to be a daughter of Massachusetts. But I'm even more honored to be in the presence of a leader like yourself, who cares deeply about what happens to all children. And who, along with your colleagues who are here today from the House, who have made it a priority of the commonwealth to do what we can to strengthen families and provide opportunities to all children. And as you were speaking, Barry leaned over and said to me, "You know, I've seen him read to a child and that's the real test, which he passed with flying colors." So, it's not just in the bills that you shepherd through the House, but also in your own personal example that we take great pride.

Now there are other elected officials here from the city council and from this area that is served by this medical center. And the partnership between the public and private sectors is really what Reach Out and Read is all about.

I've been looking forward to coming to this celebratory party for a long time. Now it's partly because I'm so pleased with the work that started here 10 year ago, and it's also because I get to see firsthand some of the characters in the books that I used to read on my own and to my daughter. Where else would I come to meet Curious George or Arthur the Aardvark and his other friends who are here? But these characters really exemplify the kind of fun that one can have when you're involved with reading to a child. You know, Barry had it exactly right, we can spend a lot of time and a lot of money looking for ways to connect with or relate to our children. And I sometimes see parents working very hard to find time to do all kinds of things with their kids, but you know, when you really look closely at what children need and what we are now hearing increasingly from children of all ages, what we hear is that they want more of our time with them. They want to be with us and sometimes even when they act like they don't, they want to hear from us and they want to know that we care about them and put them at the center of our lives. Well, that is what I think Reach Out and Read exemplifies. It's not any kind of high-tech, costly solution to re-connecting families, it is the most basic kind of approach which sends a very clear message from an adult to a child, "You're really special, because I'm giving you something that I could never ever replace; the time out of this day to spend with you.

I have lots of pleasant memories from my own growing up years of a grandfather who read to me and my brothers. And certainly, Bill and I have a lot of memories of reading to Chelsea and her friends as often as we could.

I think when we launched this program together back in January of 1997, to take what worked so well here in Boston to the entire country. We could never have predicted the extraordinary response that it has created. We've done a lot of events together; I've been with Barry and Perri, and others on many occasions, in various parts of our country. We've even made Reach Out and Read part of our annual White House Easter Egg Roll—handing out prescriptions and books for reading as children and their parents left the lawn.

But the most important people in this whole venture, with all due respect to us adults, are our children. I, like many of you, have seen the excitement in a child's eyes. And I was watching the Abdullah children and I particularly could see as their mother was speaking, the alertness and the concentration and when she finished the sort of thumbs up that her daughter gave her, because that connection that comes through exciting the interest and enthusiasm of a child is something that can never, ever be forgotten.

I have also seen, from the research that is available to us now, how reading to a child is one of the best ways of building that child's brain. Now we don't actually see that happen, but we can see the results of it when it does happen. Sometimes when I speak about this, I hear people's questions. They say, "Well, does it really make a difference to read to a child before the child can talk?" Well, in fact, it makes all the difference in the world, because by reading to a child, telling a child a story, associating those actions with the warmth of an embrace or lying across a chair, or a couch, or a bed together, you're sending a very strong signal to that child's brain cells to get connected up, because there's a lot of good learning ahead. It's no coincidence, therefore, that we launched the prescription for reading initiative at the White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning. We know that a baby's brain is a work in progress. And reading to a child literally helps that brain grow.

We've now distributed nearly 3 million books to nearly one million children. And it's exciting to see so many of the private sector partners who have supported Reach Out and Read and Prescription for Reading joining us today. I'm very pleased to announce, therefore, a remarkable number of new commitments to Reach Out and Read in honor of this 10th anniversary celebration. Scholastic Inc., for example, will donate 100,000 books over the next year. And Scholastic will extend its challenge grant to give 5,000 books for every \$100,000 that the program raises.

I was pleased to speak to the Book Sellers Association, a few months ago, to challenge them to get involved with Reach Out and Read and Prescription for Reading and Houghton-Mifflin and Candlewick Publishers have also pledged special commitments. CVS Pharmacy is stepping up to the plate with a donation of \$250,000 to support local and national programs. CVS Pharmacy's very generous gift will support Reach Out and Read efforts in 8 states and the District of Columbia. And the Cordelia Corporation is pledging a gift of \$300,000 and I want to thank them very much. The Cordelia Corporation's gift will support continued expansion of the program nation wide – and \$50,000 in books for the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York.

The medical community is also providing vital support. The Pfizer Pediatric Health Corporation has pledged to expand its commitment to Reach Out and Read – and to support the very first national conference, which will bring people together from around the country to learn what we need to know about how we can make Reach Out and Read even more successful. And finally, 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 and I want to commend you for that. I think Boston Medical Center HealthNet is really on the cutting edge of what health care needs to be doing in the 21st century. How do we do more preventive health care; how do we do more wellness work? Well, this is the kind of initiative that can make a very big difference in the future.

We have a lot to celebrate, and the vision that Barry had 10 years ago that many of you have helped him realize is really now taking off around our nation. Now as many of you know, I've been thinking a lot about the millennium and the end of a century, and we've chosen as our theme in the White House – "Honor the past and imagine the future." The President and I have asked all Americans to think how we preserve the common values that bind us all together as Americans and as human beings, and what are the gifts that we want to bring with us into the 21st century.

Early this morning, Bill and I met with a group of about 40 young people, high school students from all over the country to talk about what was on their minds, particularly in the wake of the tragedy in Littleton, Colorado. And we listened as they talked about all of the issues that they think we need to address at the nation. We talked about the need for sensible gun control, which we hope will make its way through the House of Representatives in the next weeks. They talked about what we should do to try to deal with the culture of violence, particularly as violence is portrayed in our media. They talked about the kind of steps that should be taken in schools to be more inclusive and provide more opportunities for young people to feel part of the school experience, and also what could be done when a young person knew that a classmate had a gun or was threatening himself or others and how that could be brought to the attention of the authorities. But they also talked a lot about what they wanted from adults, what they wanted from their parents... the word "time" came up time and time again. The feeling that, as one

young women said to me, "You know, we can't raise ourselves, our parents have to do this for us. They have to be there for us. They have to listen to us. They have to give us the guidance that we need." They talked a lot about how fast-paced our culture is... how we're all rushing around, we're working so hard; and what can be done to carve out that special space and that necessary time for children to feel that they are the most important people to the adults in their lives. Well, there is more than enough work to go around; there's a lot of responsibility all of us as adults should share. Each of us in our professional, and business, our private and our public roles... we need to ask ourselves, "What can we do to do better for our children?" Well, one of the ways we can think about responding to that need is through Reach Out and Read. It may, as some have already said, sound like a simple thing, but many of us who have worked with children, studied children, had our own children, know that very often it is those simple things that really matter. So what started here 10 years ago and is now building as a national movement could not be more timely. And the recognition by the Massachusetts's Legislature under the Speaker's leadership that these are the kinds of steps that the public and the private sectors should take together to support families in the most important job any of us will ever do, that indeed is the kind of gift that all of us should be taking into the future.

Thank you very, very much.

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REACH OUT AND READ
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
JUNE 10, 1997**

Talking Points

[Acknowledgments: **Mayor Schmoke**; **Dr. David Ramsay**, President, University of Maryland at Baltimore; **Dr. Donald Wilson**, Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine; **Dr. Morton Rapoport**, President and CEO, University of Maryland Medical System; **Dr. Michael Berman**, Professor and Chairman, Department of Pediatrics, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Maryland's Hospital for Children.]

- I am delighted to be back in Baltimore. During my visit in September, I received a bumper sticker and pin declaring Baltimore 'the city that reads'. So I am very pleased to be here today to further the tradition of reading in the City of Baltimore and help launch the Baltimore Prescription for Reading Partnership.
- This day is possible because of the efforts of so many people working together. I would like to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation for their generous support; Reach Out and Read, without whose leadership this day may not have come; Scholastic Publishing and First Book, who have been such important partners in our efforts to 'prescribe reading'; the American Academy of Pediatrics for recommending that pediatricians prescribe reading to infants and toddlers as part of standard pediatric care; and all the wonderful institutions in Baltimore who are joining the Partnership.
- We are beginning to understand just how important reading is to a child's emotional and cognitive development. We now know that a baby's brain is a work in progress. And that brain, like the baby's body, needs to be nourished through activities with parents or caregivers like reading books, singing songs and telling bedtime stories. These activities actually help the baby's brain grow and strengthen emotional bonds.
- We know that most parents come into contact with a pediatrician. They might not take their child to a library or preschool program until the child is over the age of three, but they will, in all likelihood, come into contact with a health care provider. If that doctor or nurse were to prescribe reading-- and take it a step further by handing that parent or caregiver a book-- in most cases, the parent will try to follow through on the doctor's prescription.
- We have to help parents understand that, no matter their educational level or reading ability, they can stimulate their children's emotional and intellectual growth by talking to and reading to their children, even when they stumble over a few words here or there. Most likely, their children won't even notice. But they *will* notice the power of reading and books to take them on fascinating adventures and introduce them to interesting ideas.

- In an event at the White House in April, I had the privilege of announcing the Prescription for Reading Partnership-- a national campaign to put books in the hands of parents who bring their young children to the doctor, and to get doctors to prescribe daily reading. The partnership-- which we are launching today in Baltimore-- challenges communities across the country to bring together pediatricians, hospitals, health centers, book publishers, libraries and literacy organizations to encourage and enable parents to read to their children on a regular basis.
- The National Partnership has already secured more than a quarter of a million books to be distributed through health clinics around the country and commitments to train pediatricians and health centers to prescribe reading and provide books to hundreds of thousands of children.
- Baltimore is a city that reads. Your efforts to work provide every child in Baltimore with a strong foundation to thrive in a new century serves as a model for cities all across the country.
- I know that there are already many institutions in Baltimore doing wonderful things to encourage reading. For example, the Greenspring Pediatric Association at Sinai Hospital has been training medical residents on the role that health professionals play in reading. Beginning today, all of the participating hospitals in Baltimore will adopt the program.
- And today, we are joined by David Kirk, author of *Miss Spider's New Car*, which he and I will read to some of Baltimore's youngest citizens in just a few minutes.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Reach Out & Read Announcement
New York City, NY
December 1, 1998

Thank you all. Thank you. Thank you so much. You know, I know that Pat [Schroeder, president and CEO of the Association of American Publishers] is very happy in her new job, but I for one really miss her in the Congress. She is somebody who can throw about five metaphors out in the space of six minutes that are all memorable -- you know, "ruffles on overcoats" and the like. She has brought to her public service, and now to her new position, the same kind of commitment to real issues and people's concerns that we so desperately need more of in our country, and I'm just delighted that she could be here with all of us today.

I'm also pleased to be at Bellevue. I received some briefing material, and I think that this is the oldest public hospital in the country. And I think we ought to applaud all the people at Bellevue for that.

I want to thank all of the speakers: I want to thank Mr. [Carlos] Perez [executive director of Bellevue Hospital Center] for inviting us here to gather to make this announcement; Dr. [Barry] Zuckerman [founding director of Reach Out & Read], whom I have known and admired now for a number of years -- I want to thank him for being the leader of Reach Out & Read and the real catalyst for so much of what has gone on around the country. Dr. [Leora] Mogilner [director of Reach Out & Read at Mt. Sinai Medical Center], I want to thank you for your work specifically here in the New York area. And I particularly want to thank Richard Robinson [president and CEO of Scholastic Corporation] for his commitment on behalf of Scholastic Corporation to making sure that the books that doctors and nurses and hospitals such as this need in order to give to families and children are made available.

I think that all of us who care about what happens in the early years of a child's life recognize how essential it is to do everything we can -- at whatever intersections we might be privileged to witness or be part of -- to create an environment in which a child and a family feel secure, given the attention that they need, and provided with the advice and the support that every new family needs. You know, it's something of a misconception that only families that might have more challenges than other families need this kind of support. I think all American families, given the kind of stresses that we live in in our time, with all of the pressures on working parents, whether it's two parents in a household, both working, or one parent working, or a single parent working, all that we know that goes on in the lives of most American families. We need to do all that we can to provide support and guidance. And we know that most parents will have some interactions with medical professionals, starting at their baby's birth and going forward for a couple of years at least. So that the brilliance behind Reach Out & Read was to recognize that that intersection where a professional could interact with a parent, a guardian, a child, over something like a vaccination, provided an opportunity to do even more.

Now we've always recognized, I think maybe intuitively, and certainly anecdotally, that reading to children seemed like a good idea. It certainly was gratifying for those of us who were lucky enough to be read to, and for those of us who continued that habit with our own children. There was just something very special about that time -- you know, holding a child, maybe cuddled up in a chair, or lying across a bed before the lights went out -- and reading a book or telling a story.

But certainly, as Pat and others have already referred to, we now know from the research that has gone on in the last several years how critical that kind of stimulation is to brain development. It used to be a good thing to do, that we thought was worthwhile. We now have empirical evidence about what it physically does to those synapses and those brain cells.

That was a real breakthrough, and it provided even more opportunity for physicians and nurses to say in their professional interactions, "You know, this is not only a nice thing to do. This will literally help your baby's brain grow."

So what became a great idea based on the observations and the research and work that was done starting some years ago in Boston, has now swept the country. Because clearly more and more parents are being reached by this information, even though we still have a long way to go. Most parents won't read scholarly journals, they might not watch programs in which this is reported, but they will listen to their doctor, they will listen to a nurse, they will listen to someone whom they believe has their child's best interest at heart. So filling that time with not only advice about vaccinations and other problems that a parent brings to you, but talking about the importance of reading and stimulating your child is something that is irreplaceable. And only those of you who take care of our children in institutions such as this and in community health centers and in private practice offices all over our country can really have that opportunity.

So about 20 months ago, after following Reach Out & Read and being very admiring of the work that was being done and the way that it was slowly spreading around our country, I was honored to host an event at the White House where publishers, and booksellers, and pediatricians, and librarians, and other dedicated citizens came together to try to create a national program. We called it the "Prescription for Reading Partnership," which was really a way of describing what Reach Out & Read does -- to prescribe reading to parents. And now we can report that we're serving more than 780,000 children in 47 states, and as you've already heard, the number of doctors who've been trained and the number of people like this coalition represent who've come together to do this has just grown by leaps and bounds.

So today, we are gathered to make an important next step in the national campaign to promote reading for children -- by launching the Reach Out & Read Coalition of Greater New York. Now there isn't any city in the world better known for its great publishing houses, its first-class hospitals, its community health centers, its nonprofit organizations. So we know that the resources are here to meet the dreams and aspirations of the Coalition founders and members. Already more than 100 organizations have joined. You have set an ambitious goal -- to

“prescribe” books to one million children in five boroughs, New Jersey, and Westchester by the year 2000, and to help prepare countless children for a better life in the future.

I’m also honored to announce today that Scholastic has expanded its generous commitment to our cause. And I want to thank Mr. Robinson and all of his colleagues. Scholastic is not only donating 50,000 books to Reach Out & Read, the coalition here in Greater New York, it is donating one book for every new child served by the program over the next five years. So if you go above the million mark, and you reach even more children, Scholastic will be there with a book for each child served. Scholastic is also extending its local challenge grant program to New York so that for every \$5,000 raised locally, 500 books will be given locally.

And, for every \$100,000 raised nationally, 5,000 books will be given nationally. And lastly, Scholastic will expand their multi-lingual book program, which I had the honor of announcing last April at the University of Chicago Hospital at an event such as this announcing the coalition in Chicago. I’ve lost track, Dick, of how many languages you already do. [Inaudible reply.] Ten languages, and now adding Bengali and Serbo-Croatian as a means to serve those growing communities here in New York. So, indeed, I want to join all of you in commending and thanking Mr. Robinson and Scholastic for contributing so much to the lives of our children.

I think you’ve heard from all of the speakers our deep concern about the growing literacy gap -- and by literacy we no longer mean just the ability to read well enough to get a job that doesn’t require a lot of reading, which used to be the old measurement, but we’re now looking at what it means to be literate, truly literate, in this new world that is being created by leaps and bounds every day through the electronic media.

If we do not do more to assist parents who have themselves limited education, low incomes, for whom English is not their primary language, to prepare their children, then that gap can only grow wider.

So we have to do more to level the playing field. We have to support programs like this, but also other high quality early childhood programs. We have to also make sure that children have access to computer literacy, so that they are not left behind by the children of people like us, who are very adept at using computers, and very comfortable with them.

So I’d also like to commend a new computer literacy program that is being launched here in New York today, thanks to some of the people here as well as their partners around the city. Over 10,000 pieces of software are being donated by U.S. Kids Compute in conjunction with the Learning Company. And First Book will in turn distribute the software across the country to improve access for children who, because of economic or other reasons, have little or no access to computers and educational software.

You know, I just spent Thanksgiving with my family, which includes a 3 ½-year-old

nephew, who has probably been read to so much he's sick of being read to. But he now operates his own little computer, he has his own little programs, he's writing little letters, he's learning all kinds of words. And we know, as Dick reminded us, that those words really go into that vocabulary bank which determines very much how children are viewed once they get to school and how they view themselves.

Any of you who have ever been in a classroom, in the first days or weeks of kindergarten or first grade, know that you have some children who come, like my nephew, probably taking his portable computer to kindergarten. And you have other children, who when the teacher passes out worksheets and says, "Circle the figure that's different," they don't know what circle means. I've been in classrooms where children have been asked to stand up and say their names, and some children only know their first names. So we know very well that by providing this kind of stimulation, and then providing the resources for the stimulation, we're going to be helping countless children just move forward a little further, a little faster, than they would have been able otherwise.

If you are involved in Reach Out & Read, and I hope every one of you has a chance to be -- not only Bellevue, but Mt. Sinai, all the hospitals and health centers represented here -- you truly will see what we've already heard reported: you will see lives changed. You will also have a way of interacting with your patients and their parents that maybe wasn't available to you before. I've had a lot of doctors tell me, Barry [Zuckerman], that it's really changed the way they relate to patients and to parents and to families. And even in this time of increased pressures on physicians and managed care restrictions, there isn't any substitute for spending time with a family, with a patient, with a parent, and trying to create that bond of trust, and then trying to leave something that can continue on after they leave the office.

So I am excited about what you are doing here, and the consequences that I know will flow from it. And I want to congratulate all of you who have worked so hard to launch this new Reach Out & Read partnership. I'll look forward to hearing the results -- both the empirical ones and the anecdotal ones -- in the months and years ahead. Because you're going to be literally changing lives as much as you will be when you provide a well-child check-up or give a vaccination. So I want to thank all of you.

And I want to thank those who, like Barry, conceived of this idea, which sounds so simple, but has such profound implications for families, for children, and for our collective future. Thank you very much.



November 30, 1998

LAUNCH OF REACH OUT AND READ COALITION OF GREATER NEW YORK

DATE: December 1, 1998
TIME: 2:30 PM
LOCATION: Bellevue Hospital,
New York City
FROM: Jennifer Klein
Neera Tanden

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this event is to (1) launch the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York, and (2) announce new commitments by Scholastic to the Prescription for Reading Partnership.

II. BACKGROUND

Overview

This event will highlight efforts to promote children's healthy development by involving health care providers in giving books to children and encouraging parents to read to their children. It builds upon a series of Prescription for Reading events you have participated in over the last two years, including the launches of city-wide Reach Out and Read initiatives in Baltimore and Chicago. You will participate in a speaking program to launch the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York and to make a series of announcements, and will sit with Perri Klass as she reads *Franklin in the Dark*, a children's book, to 11 children who are patients at the Bellevue pediatric clinic (you have the option to join her in the reading). There will be a pre-program before your arrival, which will include doctors who are members of Reach Out and Read, as well as children's book authors.

Research

There is a new and growing body of research on the effectiveness of pediatric literacy programs, which shows that early exposure to books promotes language development, children who are read to are more likely to learn "on schedule," and children who have grown up with books start school with an array of early literacy skills.

The Prescription for Reading Partnership

In 1997, you called on booksellers, publishers, libraries, hospitals, pediatricians, health centers, and others to work together to make sure that infants and toddlers who come to the doctor have access to books and are read to regularly. From your challenge, the Prescription for Reading Partnership was born, which coordinates and builds on existing efforts such as Reach Out and Read, Scholastic and the American Library Association's Born to Read program. The Partnership has been incredibly successful, increasing the number of children served by Reach Out and Read doctors from 150,000

to 782,000 at 390 sites in 47 states; increasing the number of doctors trained to "prescribe reading" from 500 to 5,000; and garnering contributions by Scholastic and First Book together of more than 235,000 books to Reach Out and Read.

Announcements and Book Reading

Launching the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York

You will launch the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York. As with the original Reach Out and Read model developed by Boston City Hospital in 1989, it is a pediatric-based early literacy program designed to encourage parents to spend time reading to their children. Through Reach Out and Read, physicians and nurse practitioners counsel parents on the importance of reading to children, volunteers read to children awaiting doctors' appointments, and medical providers give children a new book at each well-child visit from six months to five years.

Since November of 1997, Reach Out and Read sites throughout the city have come together to help doctors promote reading by parents to their children. The launch of the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York represents 27 area hospitals and community health centers with 40 sites in the five boroughs of New York City, as well as in Westchester and northern New Jersey. A number of community-based literacy and health related organizations have also joined the initiative to reach over 100 partners. Currently, over 700 pediatricians at these sites have already provided books at approximately 200,000 well visits per year to New York's ethnically diverse and low income population. Today, as a Coalition, Greater New York Reach Out and Read will commit to prescribe reading to one million kids by the year 2000.

The Coalition is sponsored by Children of Bellevue Inc., the Cordelia Corporation, the Dreyfus Corporation, Manhattan Marketing Ensemble, Pfizer Pediatric Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Reach Out and Read National Training Center, Scholastic Inc., and the W.T. Grant Foundation, and is endorsed by the local chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

You will also note that a new computer literacy program will also be launched in New York on the same day. U.S. Kids Compute! will donate 10,000 pieces of software to First Book, who will in turn distribute the software across the country for children who have not had access to computers and educational software.

New Commitments by Scholastic

In addition, you will announce Scholastic's new commitments to the Prescription for Reading Initiative. First, Scholastic will donate 50,000 books to the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York, and will commit to donating a book for every new child served for the next five years. They will also extend their local challenge grant program to New York City so that for every \$5,000 raised locally, Scholastic will donate 500 books to that area. They will also continue their national challenge grant program, through which they donate 5,000 more books for every \$100,000 raised nationally. Finally, Scholastic will expand their multi-lingual book program to include two additional languages -- Bengali and Serbo-Croatian -- in order to serve growing communities in New York. Scholastic already provides Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Vietnamese -- each with an English translation on every page.

Book Reading

After the speaking program, you will join Perri Klass, a pediatrician and Medical Director of Reach Out and Read at Boston Medical Center, in a book reading before a small audience of 11 children, ages three to seven years old. Dr. Klass will read *Franklin in the Dark*, which was written by Paulette Bourgeois and illustrated by Brenda Clark. (See attached.)

Bellevue Hospital

Bellevue Hospital, the nation's oldest public hospital, is the home of New York's oldest and largest Reach Out and Read site, which has been in operation since September 1995. In 1998, Bellevue's Reach Out and Read program will serve approximately 4,500 children between six months and five years of age through roughly 15,000 family contacts. Since its inception, 120 pediatric residents and over 20 attending pediatricians have been trained to integrate parental guidance on literacy into pediatric practice. Bellevue Hospital's Reach Out and Read program is supported by the Dreyfus Corporation and the Children of Bellevue, Inc., a non-profit organization that funds quality of life programs for pediatric patients at the hospital.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Program Participants (Bios attached)

- The First Lady
- Carlos Perez, Executive Director, Bellevue Hospital
- Barry Zuckerman, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics and Public Health, and Chief of Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center
- Leora Mogilner, M.D., Attending Physician and Instructor, Department of Pediatrics, Mount Sinai Medical Center
- Richard Robinson, Chairman of the Board, President and CEO, Scholastic Corporation
- Patricia Schroeder, former Member of Congress, and President and CEO of the Association of American Publishers

Pre-Program Participants

- Carmen Ramos-Bonoan, M.D., Pediatrician, New York City Department of Health and member of the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York's steering committee
- Luis Rojas Marcos, M.D., President of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation
- Rosemary Wells, author of children's books
- Vera Williams, author of children's books
- Mark Teague, all authors of children's books

Meet and Greet

In addition to the program and pre-program participants:

- Bernard Dreyer, M.D., Director, Pediatric Resource Center of Bellevue Hospital
- Patrice Kozlowski, Vice President, Corporate Communications, The Dreyfus Corporation
- Pam McDonnell, Director of Public Affairs, Bellevue Hospital Center
- Carol Blumenfeld, Director of Development & Communications, MHRA
- Helen Benham, Corporate Vice President, Scholastic Corporation
- Sean Collins, President of the Board of Directors of Bellevue Hospital

- Jim Stiles, Executive Vice President of Lutheran Medical Health System
- Randall Kaye, M.D., Pediatric Health Team, Pfizer, Inc.
- William Speck, M.D., President and CEO of New York Presbyterian Hospital
- Evelyn Lipper, M.D., Director of Child Development Division at New York Presbyterian Hospital
- Ambassador Betty King, U.S. Representative on the UN Economic and Social Council
- Joan Belkin
- Cynthia Carrington-Murray, Executive Director of Cumberland Diagnostics & Treatment Center
- Linda van Schaik, Director of Bellevue's Reach Out and Read and Chair of the Reach Out and Read Coalition of Greater New York
- Claudia Edwards, Executive Director of Reader's Digest Foundation
- Sabrina Martin, M.D., Medical Director of Frank X. Graves Family Health Center
- Joseph Lurio, M.D., Chair of the Family Practice Department of Catholic Medical Center
- Maria New, M.D., New York Presbyterian Hospital
- Marta Silverberg, M.D., Mount Sinai
- Jan Braun, Program Manager, Reader's Digest Foundation
- Helen Bing, Cordelia Corporation

IV. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- Upon arrival at Bellevue Hospital, the First Lady will proceed to the Cafeteria Ante-Room, where she will take part in a meet and greet with 27 guests;
- Then the First Lady will proceed to the Rose Room, where she will take part in a speaking program;
- Dr. Carlos Perez, Executive Director of Bellevue Hospital, will open the program with brief welcoming remarks and introduce Dr. Barry Zuckerman;
- Dr. Barry Zuckerman, Chief of Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center and Founder of Reach Out and Read, will make brief remarks and introduce Dr. Leora Mogilner;
- Dr. Leora Mogilner, Attending Pediatrics Physician at Mount Sinai Medical Center, will make brief remarks and introduce Richard Robinson;
- Richard Robinson, Chairman of the Board, President and CEO of Scholastic, Inc., will make brief remarks and introduce Pat Schroeder;
- Pat Schroeder, former Member of Congress, and President and CEO of the Association of American Publishers will make brief remarks and introduce the First Lady;
- The First Lady makes remarks and upon conclusion will proceed to the Conference Room for a book reading, where she will join Perri Klass, a pediatrician and Medical Director of Reach Out and Read at Boston Medical Center, in her reading of *Franklin in the Dark*, to 11 children who are patients at the Bellevue pediatric clinic (option for the First Lady to join in the reading)
- Upon conclusion of the book reading, the First Lady will depart.

V. PRESS

Open press

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
PRESCRIPTION FOR READING EVENT
LEARNING IDEAS
DISTRICT HEIGHTS, MARYLAND
MARCH 2, 1998

- It's a pleasure to be here at Learning Ideas, and to join Representative Stenny Hoyer; Barbara Bonds Thomas (American Booksellers Association); Bob Chase (National Education Association) and all of you, to celebrate the joy -- and importance -- of reading to children. Thank you for coming.
- We're gathered here today to mark the culmination of the Prescription for Reading Partnership's *Read to Your Bunny* Campaign -- a unique effort to bring the book industry and the health care industry together to ensure good reading habits -- along with good health habits -- for our nation's children. Since last November, doctors have given "prescriptions" redeemable at participating bookstores for a copy of *Read to Your Bunny* to about 200,000 children. Over 1500 bookstores have participated. And today, we're announcing that at least 5,000 remaining books will be donated to local hospitals in this area, health centers across the country, and to Prescription for Reading partners Reach Out and Read and First Book.
- We are also here to join children and parents in communities nationwide who are participating in the National Education Association's "Read Across America" project, as a way to celebrate the birthday today of Dr. Seuss, one of the world's most beloved children's authors.
- The Prescription for Reading Partnership grew out of a simple idea: Nearly every new parent has contact with a pediatrician or a health care provider during those first critical years of a child's life. If that doctor or nurse were to prescribe reading -- and take it a step further by handing that new parent or caregiver a book -- parents are likely to follow the doctor's advice. And what a difference that simple prescription for reading will make in a child's life.
- We learned at last year's White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning that science proves what we've always known instinctively -- that time spent sharing a favorite book with a child, even a newborn, not only strengthens the bond between a parent and child. It also helps a baby's brain to grow, and prepares him or her for a lifetime of reading and learning.
- I believe that few things will make a more dramatic difference over the next ten years in this country than to persuade young parents -- of all educational and economic levels -- to take seriously this mission of reading to and talking with their young babies. So a year ago, I challenged booksellers, publishers, libraries, hospitals, pediatricians, health centers and others to work together to make this simple idea a reality.

- The result was the formation of the Prescription for Reading Partnership -- a national coalition of health care organizations, booksellers, libraries, publishers and foundations, who have spearheaded wonderful programs like this *Read to Your Bunny* campaign.
- The success of the *Read to Your Bunny* campaign is due in large part to the strong commitment of the American Bookseller's Association; in partnership with the Association of Booksellers for Children; Scholastic Publishing and First Book; the Ingram Book Company, and local bookstores and educational centers like this across the country. Thank you all for your valuable contributions. Special thanks also to Rosemary Wells, author of *Read to Your Bunny* -- whom I will join in a moment to read her wonderful book.
- As America moves into the Information Age and the global economy, our children will be presented with boundless opportunities and unprecedented challenges. It's up to us to ensure that every one of them has the skills and confidence to seize those opportunities, and meet those challenges. All of these reading initiatives that we're talking about today are bringing us closer to fulfilling the President's America Reads challenge for the nation: to make sure that every child -- of every background and income -- can read independently by the end of third grade.
- I'm very excited to announce that in a moment, we will be joined by some very special guests -- 15 children from the John Howard Elementary School Head Start Program. Accompanying them will be a very special friend to all children -- the Cat in the Hat. The Cat is wonderful reminder of how many children over the years have fallen in love with reading and books because of zany Dr. Seuss characters like him.
- Dr. Seuss once said: "A person's a person, no matter how small." Today, let's renew our commitment to ensure that every child in America -- no matter how young or how small -- gets the love and attention and stimulation they need to grow and flourish. And one of the best ways to give them those building blocks for the future is to do what Rosemary Wells and I are going to do right now: read to our children.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
PRESCRIPTION FOR READING ANNOUNCEMENT
THE WHITE HOUSE
APRIL 16, 1997

I am delighted to welcome each of you to the White House. Today, I am pleased to announce the Prescription for Reading Partnership, a new national effort which we believe will make an important difference in the lives of children and families all across our country. Through this partnership, pediatricians, hospitals, health centers, book publishers, libraries and literacy organizations, many of whom are represented in this room, have pledged to work together to encourage and enable more parents across our country read to their children regularly.

As many of you know, this is a crucial task. New research has shown that talking and reading to infants and toddlers is vital to their neurological, intellectual, and emotional development. Time spent sharing a favorite book with a child -- even a newborn -- strengthens the bond between a parent and child, prepares him or her for reading, and literally helps a baby's brain grow.

Unfortunately, too many children are still missing this early stimulation. Over the years I have heard parents -- parents who clearly want to do everything they can for their children -- tell me they never really talked to their babies because they thought the infants were too young to understand what they were saying. I've met parents who believed that they could not read well enough to read a book to a child.

We have to help parents understand that, no matter their educational level or reading ability, they can stimulate their children's emotional and intellectual growth by talking to and reading to their children, even when they stumble over a few words here or there. Most likely, their children won't even notice. But they *will* notice the power of reading and books to take them on fascinating adventures and introduce them to interesting ideas.

Today's initiative was inspired by the national Reach Out and Read program and the American Library Association's Born to Read program. Both efforts recognized the vital role the medical community could play in encouraging parents to read to their infants and toddlers. Doctors are often the first professionals our children see on a regular basis. While parents may not take a child to a library or a preschool program until he or she is three, they will most likely take a child to a doctor or a nurse for vaccinations and checkups. These regular visits present medical professionals with important opportunities to instill good reading and learning habits -- along with good health habits -- in parents and children.

So it makes sense for our doctors and health professionals to use their authority and influence -- yes, those white uniforms and stethoscopes -- to "prescribe" daily reading to young patients and their parents during every visit. Research has shown that these prescriptions are followed: Parents and children who are given books by their doctors are more likely to read

aloud at home.

When I first heard about these efforts to “prescribe” reading and provide books to low-income families, I was very impressed. I realized that it was an idea that could easily be brought to many more children and parents in communities all across our country. So I wrote about it in my book and in Time magazine, talked about it in visits to hospitals, and, earlier this year, invited representatives from the health, library and publishing communities to come to the White House to discuss ways to make this a truly national effort.

The national Prescription for Reading Partnership is the result of these discussions. With the leadership of Reach Out and Read, Scholastic, Inc. and First Book, as well as the hard work of so many others represented here, we have built a diverse coalition of organizations who have pledged to make this idea a reality in doctors’ offices, hospitals and health clinics across the country.

These commitments come from the worlds of publishing, medicine, health, and even, television. And I’d like to take a few moments to highlight some of them:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics will formally recommend to its 53,000 members that they make prescribing reading part of standard pediatric care and well-child visits. They have also agreed to provide their members with specially-designed reading prescription pads -- slightly smaller versions of the one in this room.
- 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 the program in their communities. Under the Reach Out and Read program, volunteers read to children in waiting rooms while health care providers prescribe reading, use books in well-child exams, and give books to children at the end of each visit.
- The National Association of Community Health Centers’ 950 members will implement Reach Out and Read programs in centers serving a total of one million parents and children by the year 2000. In a similar effort, the National Association of Children’s Hospitals and Related Institutions will challenge its members to triple the number of hospitals using Reach Out And Read.
- Scholastic, Inc., has promised to contribute 100,000 new books to health care professionals and clinics participating in the Reach Out and Read or the Born to Read programs. Scholastic’s pledge is part of its already-announced commitment to provide one million books to the President’s America Reads challenge. The company has also promised to match new donations to the Partnership with additional books.
- In addition to working tirelessly to bring all of today’s groups together, First Book, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing disadvantaged children with their own

books, has also donated 100,000 books to the effort.

- Another publishing company, Random House, will contribute 5,000 books **a month** for twelve months to Reach Out and Read
- The American Library Association will work with the nation's 16,000 public libraries to establish Born to Read programs with health professionals in their communities. And let me add my own call to our country's health clinics and libraries to work together to make sure every child has books to read and people to read to them.
- The National Association of Chain Drug Stores and the National Community Pharmacists Association will distribute reading tips and suggested book titles to parents who visit their pharmacies.
- I'd also like to thank the Association of American Publishers, The American Booksellers Association, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Irving Harris and the Harris Foundation of Chicago, Mellon Trust, the Dreyfus Corporation, Reading Is Fundamental and ABC Television for their individual commitments to the Partnership.

These commitments are just the beginning. I have no doubt the Partnership, which seems to be growing everyday, will also help our children grow and develop their full potential to learn, to feel, to communicate and relate to others. It will also bring us a giant step closer to answering the President's America Reads challenge to make sure that every child can read independently by the end of third grade. Early reading at home, in the comfort of a parent's lap, is some of the most important preparation a child can have for reading in school. That's why the President has made the Parents as First Teachers Grants a vital part of the America Reads Challenge proposal.

But let's remember that it won't take just parents, but all of us to make sure every child reaches his or her full potential. I thank all of you for recognizing the important roles you could play in bringing books into more homes, preparing children for the future and serving your communities.

Tomorrow, leading neuroscientists, pediatricians, child development specialists, child care providers, business and religious leaders from across the country will be gathering here to discuss the new and exciting scientific discoveries about the brain and early childhood development. One of the primary goals of the White House Conference is to find ways to put the research to practical use, and to call upon all sectors of society to make sure our children benefit from this new knowledge. I believe that the Prescription for Reading Partnership is one of the best answers to that call. It is a wonderful way to begin our conference.

Now I'd like to introduce Dr. Robert Hanneman, President of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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TRANSCRIPT IN PROGRESS

SPEECH BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
TO THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN PUBLISHERS
THE MAYFLOWER HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D.C.

BODY:

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Brian, for that generous introduction. But it is I who should thank all of you for the work that you have done and that we have done together. I am delighted to be surrounded by so many passionate advocates for books and reading. And I want to thank you for the support that you give through your work and through your advocacy on behalf of literacy.

I also want to thank my friend, Pat Schroeder, for inviting me here today. I always love being around Pat. Her tremendous energy, her commitment, the sheer joy she brings to everything she does, is always an inspiration to me.

I also want to thank you and join you in saluting National Public Radio for all that NPR has done over the years to promote the love of reading and the love of books. I know that we have in this crowd, I'm told, some of the great personalities of NPR. And I want to thank all of them. I don't know if Susan Stamberg is here or Linda Wertheimer or Bob Edwards or Scott Simon or Diane Rehm and some of my favorites.

But I want to acknowledge them and thank them, and especially to salute them for the work they do in giving us news and information in a thoughtful way. I just can't believe, though; I'm still stunned -- I see Diane, I see a few others -- that they're all here at the same time, given their schedules. That is a rare event, indeed.

The work that you have done over the years on behalf of children and reading has helped to promote to a high national priority our understanding of the significance of reading to and inspiring a love of books among our children.

I'm thinking, for example, of how AAP stepped in and funded the printing of the original Reach Out and Read program manuals back before it was a national program. And it's hard to exaggerate how important that early assistance was.

You know, we kind of take it for granted, if you come from a family that loves books or if you've been read to as a child, that that is something that is probably going on in homes and families. But I learned early on that that is not the case. I can remember probably now about, oh, 16, 17 years ago just visiting with some women who were holding young children and toddlers hanging on to them, and we were all talking about some things. I had met them in the course of some political campaigning for my husband.

And just in the passing way one makes conversation, I said, "Well, I imagine you're having a great time talking to and reading to your baby." And there was a total blank look on this woman's face, and she just, in a very straightforward

way, said, "Well, why would I talk to her?" holding an infant. "She can't talk back. And why would I read to her? She can't understand that."

And that was my first sort of moment of realization that we can talk a lot about literacy and we can put on PSAs about literacy and we can lecture people about literacy. But if we don't somehow connect the parenting and family experience with literacy, we really lose out on a great moment, an opportunity to try to persuade children not only that books should be part of their lives, but more importantly, helping them build a vocabulary.

And now, as we know from the brain conference that we had on what is happening inside those tiny brains from the very beginnings of life, we know that literally brain cells are being created; synapses are being formed. You know, it wasn't very long ago, about the time I was having this conversation, about two decades ago, that we thought a baby's brain structure was complete at birth. And we now understand that it truly is a work in progress and that what we do with a child has a direct impact on that child's intellectual and emotional growth.

Reading is very important, and talking can 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. I don't know why it took us so long to figure that out and had to have research scientists tell us that. But now that we know, we should do something with it. Yet there are many parents who themselves were not raised in a book-rich environment, and there are even parents who themselves are well-educated who don't read anymore and don't read around their children. And yet I've rarely met a parent who didn't want to do what was best for his or her child.

In thinking about ways that we could create more environments and more encouragement for the act of reading and the interaction that comes when you read to a child, we began looking at programs all over the country. And we were struck by how, in every walk of life, every socioeconomic group, there is one event that most families are religious about, and that is getting immunizations, taking a child for well-child checkup. But even if one misses those two events, eventually, with most babies, you end up seeking medical help.

And we learned about the wonderful program that came out of the work done in Boston that was really created out of the observations of doctors and nurses that if they left books or reading material lying around their waiting rooms, they would often disappear if they were in a large hospital setting or a public health setting, because the people who came didn't have books and reading materials, and they would take it home with them.

And so, all of a sudden, as sometimes ideas happen, conversations started and one doctor said to another doctor, "Well, why don't we provide the reading material and why don't we prescribe reading to our patients?" because if you think about what will make a child's life successful, yes, be sure they're vaccinated, yes, give that worried mom some good advice about what to do about that earache, but also think about the academic challenges that children,

particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, will face. How can we help them get a running start? And that was the idea behind the successful Reach Out and Read program that many of you supported.

As Brian said, two years ago I had the honor of announcing a national effort to take that program from one end of our country to the other and to use the trust and influence of doctors and health care professionals to reach, along with librarians and booksellers and others who are in the business of books and reading, more parents and even children themselves.

We called that national effort Prescription for Reading Partnership, and we picked the word prescription for a reason. When we think of a prescription, we think of those slips of papers that were handed by our doctors, and we actually wanted doctors to prescribe reading on a slip of paper. So don't just take, you know, two aspirin and go to bed. Take this book and read it before bedtime. So all of a sudden, doctors began writing prescriptions for reading.

In just two years, nearly 400,000 books have been donated to the Prescription for Reading Partners by major publishers, many of you represented in this room. And the number of children has increased from 150,000 to over 780,000. We've seen a dramatic increase in the number of hospitals and health centers involved. And I've been privileged to go to several hospitals to make announcements about this program. None of it could have happened without each of you being a participant.

This goes hand in hand with other efforts to try to create literacy awareness and really the love of learning in our country. I'm very pleased that over the last six years we've done a lot to try to help improve education and really reach out and assist those who are on the front lines with our kids, primarily our teachers and young parents themselves. We've expanded dramatically after-school programs, where reading and studying have a major role to play in making sure that all children get the help they need after school and are kept in a safe place, where they'll be well looked after.

We also know that through the president's America Reads program, we've organized an army of tutors to help elementary school children read, hopefully by the end of third grade, independently; and not just read, but loving reading as well.

There's been progress made in connecting every school and library to the Internet. And we're intent upon reducing class size in the early grades so that more teachers can be hired to work with children as they attempt to read.

I have been in and out of schools all over our country, and you can walk in and you can have a sense, almost from the beginning, about what's going on in that school. When you walk into a library that doesn't have very many books, when you walk down a hallway and you see falling plaster or broken windows, when you go into a classroom and they are using recycled instructional materials, or when you watch a teacher trying to cope with 30 or 35 eight- and nine-year-olds, you can understand how important it is for us to commit ourselves to improving public education and giving our teachers the tools and support, the resources they need, because reading is often a great challenge for children who don't

come from verbal backgrounds. It's also a challenge for the many, many children for whom English is not their primary language.

And I don't think there would be any disagreement about the goal of trying to improve public education so that it better prepares all of our children. There may be some discussion about the strategies to follow, but there will be nothing that can ever replace the magic that occurs between a teacher and a child. And if we don't have more opportunities for that magic to happen, particularly with children who need extra help, they will just continue to fall further and further behind.

But in addition to the government actions that are happening at the federal,

the state and the local level, as important as they are, it is also critical that we continue the public-private partnerships that you have been a part of. As this gathering knows so well, the private sector must and, I hope, will willingly continue to play an important role in supporting educational efforts. That's why I'm 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 them and their parents as well to read. First, AAP will begin an ambitious public awareness campaign called "Get Caught Reading," designed to spark an interest in reading among Americans aged 18 to 34. That's a critical age group, because it includes, obviously, the parents of very many young children.

This industry-wide campaign will include posters in major book chains and donated print ads in leading magazines. Its message, that reading is cool, will be carried by celebrities like Whoopi Goldberg and Rosie O'Donnell, who are going to be among those getting caught. Now, I don't know about you, but I think the milk ads encourage me to drink more milk. And I'm hoping that the "Get Caught Reading" ads will have enough of a sort of rebellious twist to encourage people who might otherwise not be caught reading to do so as well. As Pat Schroeder says, it's important for all of us to work together to promote the sheer joy of reading.

Second, I'm pleased to announce that the McDonald's 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, McDonald's will produce 13 million Happy Meal bags that have attached to them booklets explaining to parents the importance of nourishing their children's minds as well as their bodies.

Now, this is a great way to reach out to families who, you know, run in for a fast-food meal and are, like all the rest of us, trying to just get from one place to the next. And I really like the slogan here: "Raising Tomorrow's Learners." And that's exactly what we're trying to do.

I hope these new initiatives will inspire others in the private sector to make similar commitments to promote reading. I don't think there are any more important missions that we can undertake as we end this century than to be sure we do raise the next generation of learners. We're certainly going to be

talking about and learning about what happens at the turn of a millennium, probably more than we care to in the next months. But I think it does give us an opportunity to just take stock and maybe pause for a moment or two to think about who we are and where we're going as Americans, as human beings, as parents, as people in every aspect of our lives.

We at the White House have chosen a theme: "Honor the past and imagine the future." And, of course, speaking for myself, I could do neither were it not for the books that I've read my entire life, if it weren't for the books that helped me learn about history and historical figures and the values that we hold as we consider ourselves Americans and build our country. And I certainly couldn't imagine the future without a lot of help from a lot of people who've given thought to the human and economic and social and political and technological challenges that we face.

Tomorrow I will be visiting Alex Haley's farm near Knoxville, Tennessee, where the Children's Defense Fund will be bringing together artists and scholars, writers and religious community leaders and all kinds of people interested in teaching the next generation of America's learners, to talk about new ideas of both honoring the past and imagining the future, a future in which every child, regardless of his or her background, what kind of family that child was born into, will have the best possible opportunity to forge his or her own future.

We're going to be talking about some of the intractable problems facing our country, problems of race and poverty. And I know we're going to be looking at reading and listening to a lot of people who've written books, both in the past and today, seeking guidance and wisdom about how we play our own role with our own families and our neighborhoods and the broader community, to honor that past and imagine that future that we want.

Thank you for being part of the great act of sparking the imagination of children, of giving parents an opportunity to curl up and relax with a small child, or after the children are in bed, helping all of us to understand how we are linked together through the written word. And because of your work, I believe we'll have a better chance in the years to come to say that we have not only honored the past and imagined the future, but helped to build it, to be a better future for all of us.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END



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

Reach Out and Read

Boston Medical Center
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NOA

Fax Cover Sheet

ROR National Staff

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Medical Director

Christine Angell
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Patricia Cowan, R.N.
Elaine Grossman, M.Ed.

Abigail Jewkes, Ed.M.

Matthew Veno

Kate Williams

DATE:

6/2/99

TO:

Nicole Rabner

FAX:

202 456 9442 6244

FROM:

Pat Cowan

Number of pages including cover sheet:

Message:

Dear Nicole

Here is the bio of Elaine Ullman, CEO of BMC.
The press release, some vignettes and two success
stories - New York and Kansas. Also updated statistics.

On-stage
speakers

Best,

Pat Cowan

Barry: brain child founder
in charge

Perri: assistant

practicing pediatrician in

If you
want to
get
something
done -
give it to
a busy
person.

A very
infected leave

3 children

Novelist, journalist - NYT

travel, med. artc

NYT book review

speaker / book societies
travels to

Wesley Knitter

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.

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

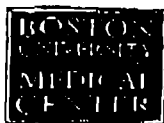
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P.2



Department of
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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

JUN. 1.1999

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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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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
- 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

So please today

*of this -
partnership
but so me
person - today*

2 new new ones

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.

WRC

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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

P.03

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 sooooo 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:

"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)

I see faces
Cher We get
fun book in the
hand -
excitement

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.



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

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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 individuals 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.

Where 'Little Women' Grew Up

A mother and daughter's favorite literary shrine was home to two families — one real and one imagined

By PERRI KLASS

MY daughter will tell you, if you ask, that she is named after Jo March, the strong-willed heroine of Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women." She will say it with a tinge of apologizing for a parent's folly, and if I am nearby I will often interject some lighthearted comment about other famous Josephines — Baker or Bernharts, for example. But the truth is, she was named after Jo March and she knows it. Almost every year on her birthday, we somehow end up at Orchard House, the wooden house in Concord, Mass., where Alcott lived with her parents and her sisters, and where she wrote "Little Women" more than a century ago.

Sometimes we take the tour. Sometimes we just walk the grounds and browse in the gift shop. Last year on Josephine's ninth birthday we only stopped briefly on our way to high tea at the Concord Inn with a group of women from another girls-book organization to which we belong, the Betsy-Tacy Society. Although we haven't yet made it to Prince Edward Island (Anne of Green Gables, of course), and the Laura Ingalls Wilder pageants in the Midwest are still in our very distant travel plans, these girls-books literary shrines give us destinations that are somehow much more compelling than straight historical sites. Yes, there is Colonial history on display in Concord, and that's just fine — but no re-enactment, no "living history" will ever make history live as vividly as a beloved novel lives in the fiction section of your brain.

At Orchard House, in 1855, the peripatetic Alcott family settled down. They had already been through the adventure of the failed Utopian community at Fruitlands in Harvard, Mass. (another entertaining day trip), had lived in many houses and boardinghouses and had stayed with generous friends. In Concord, not far from such good friends and neighbors as Ralph Waldo Emerson, they found a little brown house that fit them well. And I pay my respects to Emerson and to Hawthorne and to all the other luminaries of 19th-century letters who have passed through Concord, and to the great thinkers of transcendentalism. But internally, like every serious Orchard House pilgrim, I also suppress a quiet smile, knowing it is "Little Women" that attracts thousands of women, all of whom feel they

PERRI KLASS, a pediatrician, is the author of "Baby Doctor" (Random House).



ABOVE Orchard House, the Alcott residence, where Louisa May Alcott drew inspiration. INSET The March family in "Little Women."

are on close personal terms with characters described in an 1868 children's book. In our minds, most of us have long inhabited Orchard House, identifying with one sister or another (you don't have to ask whom I identify with: I named my daughter to show my devotion). We knew these people, or we think we do; we've been at the table for their meals, sat up nights crying over their tragedies, helped with the scripping and saving to get by.

They were an eccentric family, the Alcotts. The house is furnished with many of their possessions, passed down to descend-

ants in the Concord area. On the house tour, the visitors murmur, attaching labels from "Little Women" to the various items they identify. Beth's piano — of course! In fact, the instrument belonged to Louisa May's sister, Elizabeth, who did indeed die young. And in May Alcott's bedroom, the drawings on the wall — of course, Amy! And now Louisa's room, the little round built-in desk on which she wrote her books. It is homey and homely and speaks of real lives lived, of attempts, successful and unsuccessful, to create meaning through philosophy, through art, through drama, through litera-

ture, and of the always interesting and always fluctuating balance between creating meaning and beauty and earning a living.

Bronson Alcott, Louisa's father, was not cut out to earn a living. Some of his failures were noble (parents pulled their children out of his school because he had an African-American pupil), others perhaps laughable (the Consociate Family at Fruitlands, and their intense discussions of theoretical transcendentalism, while the farm failed around them). But he was a devoted father and family man, and fortunately there were other family members willing to go out into

the world and grapple with it. His wife, Abigail, a descendant of the illustrious Sewall family (Marmee in "Little Women"), was a social worker with the poor of Boston. Their daughter May went off to Paris to paint. And Louisa wrote her stories and her books. And they cooked and ate and did housework and needlework and played music and put on plays and socialized — and all of this is real to me because Louisa made it into a story. I have never come away from a history book having long conversations with the characters, hearing their voices. There is no historical site I could visit where I could happily relive important scenes. But taking the tour at Orchard House reminds me that I am no fanatic; I am just an average everyday tourist.

Recently my daughter reread "Little Women," then went on to read the sequel, "Little Men" and "Jo's Boys." She found them unexpectedly sad — beloved family members die young, reflecting the realities of life in the 19th century (or, really, life any time). In addition to Elizabeth, Louisa May Alcott outlived May, who died of meningitis in Paris, and her sister Anna's husband, John Pratt (John Brooke in "Little Women"); Louisa, who never married, helped to rear and support May's child and Anna's two, and you can see their toys at Orchard House. Josephine and I have discussed in some detail which plot lines Louisa invented and which she worked from life.

Josephine wants to go back to Orchard House now that she has read the books, and I have promised a return trip. I could wax parental and educational about what I think she is learning from all this — a sense of the reality of other times and other lives, a feeling for how fact is made into fiction, a respect for the power of fiction to keep lives and times fresh and vivid, a firsthand knowledge of how strong a reader's attachment to a fictional character can be — but really, I'm just delighted to have an excuse to go back and take the tour again. We will indulge ourselves in the shop, stocking up on Louisa May Alcott bookmarks ("I'd rather be a free spinster and peddle my own canoe," "Work is always my salvation and I will celebrate it"), and wander through the rooms, happy to let our own lives touch and be touched by lives we think we part understand and part imagine. It's several pilgrimages rolled into one: we're visiting a real place, where something real happened, but also visiting a place where something was imagined, and paying tribute to the strength of that imagination. And in doing that, I guess, we are making a pilgrimage as well into our own imaginations, visiting and revisiting a place we think we've lived.

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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 chest, 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

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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-

See EXPERT, C2, Col. 1

Take Two Books and Call Me . . .

EXPERT, From C1

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, car seats, speech and language. I have the wisdom of pediatric textbooks and a wealth 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-asked 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 ex-

perts 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 to-day 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 3-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 read to 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.

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.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
PRESCRIPTION FOR READING EVENT
LEARNING IDEAS
DISTRICT HEIGHTS, MARYLAND
MARCH 2, 1998

- It's a pleasure to be here at Learning Ideas, and to join Representative Stenny Hoyer; Barbara Bonds Thomas (American Booksellers Association); Bob Chase (National Education Association) and all of you, to celebrate the joy -- and importance -- of reading to children. Thank you for coming.
- We're gathered here today to mark the culmination of the Prescription for Reading Partnership's *Read to Your Bunny* Campaign -- a unique effort to bring the book industry and the health care industry together to ensure good reading habits -- along with good health habits -- for our nation's children. Since last November, doctors have given "prescriptions" redeemable at participating bookstores for a copy of *Read to Your Bunny* to about 200,000 children. Over 1500 bookstores have participated. And today, we're announcing that at least 5,000 remaining books will be donated to local hospitals in this area, health centers across the country, and to Prescription for Reading partners Reach Out and Read and First Book.
- We are also here to join children and parents in communities nationwide who are participating in the National Education Association's "Read Across America" project, as a way to celebrate the birthday today of Dr. Seuss, one of the world's most beloved children's authors.
- The Prescription for Reading Partnership grew out of a simple idea: Nearly every new parent has contact with a pediatrician or a health care provider during those first critical years of a child's life. If that doctor or nurse were to prescribe reading -- and take it a step further by handing that new parent or caregiver a book -- parents are likely to follow the doctor's advice. And what a difference that simple prescription for reading will make in a child's life.
- We learned at last year's White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning that science proves what we've always known instinctively -- that time spent sharing a favorite book with a child, even a newborn, not only strengthens the bond between a parent and child. It also helps a baby's brain to grow, and prepares him or her for a lifetime of reading and learning.
- I believe that few things will make a more dramatic difference over the next ten years in this country than to persuade young parents -- of all educational and economic levels -- to take seriously this mission of reading to and talking with their young babies. So a year ago, I challenged booksellers, publishers, libraries, hospitals, pediatricians, health centers and others to work together to make this simple idea a reality.

- The result was the formation of the Prescription for Reading Partnership -- a national coalition of health care organizations, booksellers, libraries, publishers and foundations, who have spearheaded wonderful programs like this *Read to Your Bunny* campaign.
- The success of the *Read to Your Bunny* campaign is due in large part to the strong commitment of the American Bookseller's Association; in partnership with the Association of Booksellers for Children; Scholastic Publishing and First Book; the Ingram Book Company, and local bookstores and educational centers like this across the country. Thank you all for your valuable contributions. Special thanks also to Rosemary Wells, author of *Read to Your Bunny* -- whom I will join in a moment to read her wonderful book.
- As America moves into the Information Age and the global economy, our children will be presented with boundless opportunities and unprecedented challenges. It's up to us to ensure that every one of them has the skills and confidence to seize those opportunities, and meet those challenges. All of these reading initiatives that we're talking about today are bringing us closer to fulfilling the President's America Reads challenge for the nation: to make sure that every child -- of every background and income -- can read independently by the end of third grade.
- I'm very excited to announce that in a moment, we will be joined by some very special guests -- 15 children from the John Howard Elementary School Head Start Program. Accompanying them will be a very special friend to all children -- the Cat in the Hat. The Cat is wonderful reminder of how many children over the years have fallen in love with reading and books because of zany Dr. Seuss characters like him.
- Dr. Seuss once said: "A person's a person, no matter how small." Today, let's renew our commitment to ensure that every child in America -- no matter how young or how small -- gets the love and attention and stimulation they need to grow and flourish. And one of the best ways to give them those building blocks for the future is to do what Rosemary Wells and I are going to do right now: read to our children.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
PRESCRIPTION FOR READING ANNOUNCEMENT
THE WHITE HOUSE
APRIL 16, 1997

I am delighted to welcome each of you to the White House. Today, I am pleased to announce the Prescription for Reading Partnership, a new national effort which we believe will make an important difference in the lives of children and families all across our country. Through this partnership, pediatricians, hospitals, health centers, book publishers, libraries and literacy organizations, many of whom are represented in this room, have pledged to work together to encourage and enable more parents across our country read to their children regularly.

As many of you know, this is a crucial task. New research has shown that talking and reading to infants and toddlers is vital to their neurological, intellectual, and emotional development. Time spent sharing a favorite book with a child -- even a newborn -- strengthens the bond between a parent and child, prepares him or her for reading, and literally helps a baby's brain grow.

Unfortunately, too many children are still missing this early stimulation. Over the years I have heard parents -- parents who clearly want to do everything they can for their children -- tell me they never really talked to their babies because they thought the infants were too young to understand what they were saying. I've met parents who believed that they could not read well enough to read a book to a child.

We have to help parents understand that, no matter their educational level or reading ability, they can stimulate their children's emotional and intellectual growth by talking to and reading to their children, even when they stumble over a few words here or there. Most likely, their children won't even notice. But they *will* notice the power of reading and books to take them on fascinating adventures and introduce them to interesting ideas.

Today's initiative was inspired by the national Reach Out and Read program and the American Library Association's Born to Read program. Both efforts recognized the vital role the medical community could play in encouraging parents to read to their infants and toddlers. Doctors are often the first professionals our children see on a regular basis. While parents may not take a child to a library or a preschool program until he or she is three, they will most likely take a child to a doctor or a nurse for vaccinations and checkups. These regular visits present medical professionals with important opportunities to instill good reading and learning habits -- along with good health habits -- in parents and children.

So it makes sense for our doctors and health professionals to use their authority and influence -- yes, those white uniforms and stethoscopes -- to "prescribe" daily reading to young patients and their parents during every visit. Research has shown that these prescriptions are followed: Parents and children who are given books by their doctors are more likely to read

aloud at home.

When I first heard about these efforts to “prescribe” reading and provide books to low-income families, I was very impressed. I realized that it was an idea that could easily be brought to many more children and parents in communities all across our country. So I wrote about it in my book and in Time magazine, talked about it in visits to hospitals, and, earlier this year, invited representatives from the health, library and publishing communities to come to the White House to discuss ways to make this a truly national effort.

The national Prescription for Reading Partnership is the result of these discussions. With the leadership of Reach Out and Read, Scholastic, Inc. and First Book, as well as the hard work of so many others represented here, we have built a diverse coalition of organizations who have pledged to make this idea a reality in doctors’ offices, hospitals and health clinics across the country.

These commitments come from the worlds of publishing, medicine, health, and even, television. And I’d like to take a few moments to highlight some of them:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics will formally recommend to its 53,000 members that they make prescribing reading part of standard pediatric care and well-child visits. They have also agreed to provide their members with specially-designed reading prescription pads -- slightly smaller versions of the one in this room.
- 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 the program in their communities. Under the Reach Out and Read program, volunteers read to children in waiting rooms while health care providers prescribe reading, use books in well-child exams, and give books to children at the end of each visit.
- The National Association of Community Health Centers’ 950 members will implement Reach Out and Read programs in centers serving a total of one million parents and children by the year 2000. In a similar effort, the National Association of Children’s Hospitals and Related Institutions will challenge its members to triple the number of hospitals using Reach Out And Read.
- Scholastic, Inc., has promised to contribute 100,000 new books to health care professionals and clinics participating in the Reach Out and Read or the Born to Read programs. Scholastic’s pledge is part of its already-announced commitment to provide one million books to the President’s America Reads challenge. The company has also promised to match new donations to the Partnership with additional books.
- In addition to working tirelessly to bring all of today’s groups together, First Book, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing disadvantaged children with their own

books, has also donated 100,000 books to the effort.

- Another publishing company, Random House, will contribute 5,000 books **a month** for twelve months to Reach Out and Read
- The American Library Association will work with the nation's 16,000 public libraries to establish Born to Read programs with health professionals in their communities. And let me add my own call to our country's health clinics and libraries to work together to make sure every child has books to read and people to read to them.
- The National Association of Chain Drug Stores and the National Community Pharmacists Association will distribute reading tips and suggested book titles to parents who visit their pharmacies.
- I'd also like to thank the Association of American Publishers, The American Booksellers Association, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Irving Harris and the Harris Foundation of Chicago, Mellon Trust, the Dreyfus Corporation, Reading Is Fundamental and ABC Television for their individual commitments to the Partnership.

These commitments are just the beginning. I have no doubt the Partnership, which seems to be growing everyday, will also help our children grow and develop their full potential to learn, to feel, to communicate and relate to others. It will also bring us a giant step closer to answering the President's America Reads challenge to make sure that every child can read independently by the end of third grade. Early reading at home, in the comfort of a parent's lap, is some of the most important preparation a child can have for reading in school. That's why the President has made the Parents as First Teachers Grants a vital part of the America Reads Challenge proposal.

But let's remember that it won't take just parents, but all of us to make sure every child reaches his or her full potential. I thank all of you for recognizing the important roles you could play in bringing books into more homes, preparing children for the future and serving your communities.

Tomorrow, leading neuroscientists, pediatricians, child development specialists, child care providers, business and religious leaders from across the country will be gathering here to discuss the new and exciting scientific discoveries about the brain and early childhood development. One of the primary goals of the White House Conference is to find ways to put the research to practical use, and to call upon all sectors of society to make sure our children benefit from this new knowledge. I believe that the Prescription for Reading Partnership is one of the best answers to that call. It is a wonderful way to begin our conference.

Now I'd like to introduce Dr. Robert Hanneman, President of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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[Text version]

Remarks by The President and First Lady At the Conference

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
Thursday, April 17, 1997

[Listen to Address with Real Audio player](#)

The East Room

MRS. CLINTON: Please be seated. Welcome to the White House and to this very special White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning. We are delighted that you can join us today not only here in the East Room, but I want to give a special welcome to the thousands of people who are joining this conference via satellite from universities, hospitals and schools around the country. There are nearly 100 sites in 37 states.

Now, at first glance, it may seem odd to hold a conference here at the White House devoted to talking about baby talk. But that discussion has never been more important, because science, as we will hear from the experts who are with us today, has now confirmed what many parents have instinctively known all along, that the song a father sings to his child in the morning, or a story that a mother reads to her child before bed help lay the foundation for a child's life, and in turn, for our nation's future.

So the President has convened this conference with a clear mission: to give the leading experts in the field of early childhood development, the scientists and pediatricians, the researchers and all of the others, the opportunity to explain their discoveries and to put this invaluable body of knowledge at the service of America's families.

But this is not just for America's families. This information is crucial for anyone in the position of leaving an impression on a young child's growing mind -- day-care workers, teachers, doctors and nurses, television writers and producers, business leaders, government policy-makers, all of us.

It is astonishing what we now know about the young brain and about how children develop. Just how far we have come is chronicled in a report being issued today by the Families and Work Institute, entitled, "Rethinking the Brain." Fifteen years ago, we thought that a baby's brain structure was virtually complete at birth. Now, we understand that it is a work in progress, and that everything we do with a child has some kind of potential physical influence on that rapidly-forming brain.

A child's earliest experiences, their relationships with parents and care-givers, the sights and sounds and

smells and feelings they encounter, the challenges they meet determine how their brains are wired. And that brain shapes itself through repeated experiences. The more something is repeated, the stronger the neuro-circuitry becomes, and those connections, in turn, can be permanent. In this way, the seemingly trivial events of our earliest months that we cannot even later recall -- hearing a song, getting a hug after falling down, knowing when to expect a smile -- those are anything but trivial.

And as we now know, for the first three years of their life, so much is happening in the baby's brain. They will learn to soothe themselves when they're upset, to empathize to get along. These experiences can determine whether children will grow up to be peaceful or violent citizens, focused or undisciplined workers, attentive or detached parents themselves.

We now have reached the point of understanding that a child's mind and a child's body must be nourished. During the first part of the 20th century, science built a strong foundation for the physical health of our children -- clean water and safe food, vaccines for preventable diseases, a knowledge of nutrition, a score of other remarkable other lifesaving achievements. The last years of this century are yielding similar breakthroughs for the brain. We are completing the job of primary prevention, and coming closer to the day when we should be able to ensure the well-being of children in every domain -- physical, social, intellectual, and emotional.

I have very high hopes not only for this conference, but for what I hope will come from it. But there are, however, two things I hope this conference will not do. The first is I hope this information will not burden or overwhelm parents. Parenting is the hardest job in the world, and the information we offer today is meant to help parents, not to make them anxious or imprison them in a set of rules. If you forget to read to your child one night, please, that's okay. (Laughter.)

Think of this conference as a map. And like any good map, it shows you a lot of different ways to get where you need to go. Many American parents have been asking for just such a map. A new survey, "From Zero to Three," the National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families shows a real hunger on the part of parents for knowledge on how they can play a positive role in their child's early development. And I hope this conference in one of the ways we answer that call.

The second thing I hope does not happen is to create the impression that once a child's third birthday rolls around, the important work is over. The early years are not the only years. The brain is the last organ to become fully mature anatomically. Neurological circuitry for many emotions isn't completed until a child reaches 15. So there is always room for appropriate stimulation, loving and nurturing care by adults who are invested in a child. There's always something that concerned adults can do.

And that has special relevance for adoption. Adoptive parents can make an enormous difference for a child at any time, and especially for older children.

That said, here is what I hope the conference will accomplish. I hope it will get across the revolutionary idea that the activities that are the easiest, cheapest and most fun to do with your child are also the best for his or her development -- singing, playing games, reading, story-telling, just talking and listening. Some of my best memories are reading to our daughter, even if I fell asleep in the nine hundredth reading of "Goodnight, Moon." But reading to her when she was young was a joy for Bill and me, and we think also a joy for her. But we had no idea 15, 16, 17 years ago that what we were doing was literally turning on the power in her brain, firing up the connections that would enable her to speak and read at as high a level as she possibly could reach.

I hope that the science presented in this conference will drive home a simple message, one supported in great detail by a report being issued today by the President's Council of Economic Advisors. If we, as a nation, commit ourselves now to modest investments in the sound development of our children, including especially our very youngest children, we will lay the groundwork for an American future with increased prosperity, better health, fewer social ills and ever greater opportunities for our citizens to lead fulfilling lives in a strong country in the next century.

There's a quote I particularly like from the Chilean poet, Gabriela Mistral, that reminds us, "Many things we need can wait; the child cannot. Now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood being made, his mind being developed. To him, we cannot say, tomorrow. His name is today." We have known this instinctively, even poetically; now we know it scientifically.

And I'm pleased to introduce someone who has been saying this and practicing it for a long time -- maybe not in poetry, but certainly in the countless stories and books and songs that he has shared not only with our daughter, but with our nephews and, really, any small child who ever crosses his path. As the President of the United States and as a father, he has acted on these beliefs, putting the well-being of children at the very center of national policy. So it pleases me greatly to introduce my fellow reader of, "Good Night, Moon," the President, Bill Clinton. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, and welcome to the White House. I was relieved to hear Hillary say that the brain is the last organ to fully develop. It may yet not be too late for me to learn how to walk down steps. (Laughter.) Or maybe I was thinking it was because I was always hugged when I fell down as a child, I did this subconsciously on purpose. (Laughter.)

Let me begin by thanking the members of the Cabinet who are here. I see Secretary Riley and Secretary Glickman. I thank Governor Romer and Governor Chiles for being here. I think Governor Miller is coming. There are many others who are here. Congresswoman De Lauro is either here or coming. Thank you, Governor Miller. I see I was looking to the left there. (Laughter.) He's from Nevada -- he just went up five points in the polls when I said that. (Laughter.)

Let me say, first of all, the first time I met Hillary, she was not only a law student, she was working with the Yale Child Study Center, and she began my education in these issues. And for that, I am profoundly grateful. And I thank her for bringing the scientists, the doctors, the sociologists, the others whose work is the basis for our discussion today here. And I, too, want to thank the thousands of others who are joining us by satellite.

This unique conference is a part of our constant effort to give our children the opportunity to make the most of their God-given potential and to help their parents lead the way, and to remind everyone in America that this must always be part of the public's business because we all have a common interest in our children's future.

We have begun the job here over the last four years by making education our top domestic priority, by passing the Family Leave act and now trying to expand it and enact a form of flex time which will give parents more options in how they take their overtime in pay or in time with their children, by the work we have done to expand the Family and Medical Leave Act and by the work we've tried to do to give parents more tools with the v-chip and the television rating system, and the work we are still carrying on to try to stop the advertising and marketing and distribution of tobacco to our children, and other work we've

done in juvenile justice and trying to keep our kids away from the dangers of alcohol and drugs.

All these are designed to help our parents succeed in doing their most important job. Now it seems to me maybe the most important thing we can actually do is to share with every parent in America the absolutely stunning things we are learning from new scientific research about how very young children learn and develop. In that regard, I'd like to thank Rob Reiner and others who are committed to distributing this information, and I'd like to thank the media here in our Nation's Capital and throughout the country for the genuine interest that they have shown in this conference.

I think there is an instinctive understanding here that this is a very, very big issue that embraces all of us as Americans, and that if we learn our lessons well and if we're patient in carrying them out, as Hillary said, knowing that there is no perfect way to raise a child, we are likely to have a very positive and profound impact on future generations in this country. So I want to thank, again, all of you for that.

Let me say there are some public programs that bear directly on early childhood development -- the Head Start program, which we've expanded by 43 percent over the last four years; the WIC program, which we've expanded by nearly 2 million participants. I have to say that I was a little disappointed -- or a lot disappointed to see a congressional committee yesterday vote to underfund the WIC program. I hope that if nothing else happens out of this conference, the results of the conference will reach the members of that congressional committee and we can reverse that before the budget finally comes to my desk.

I would also like to remind all of you that this conference is literally just a start. We have to look at the practical implications of this research for parents, for care-givers, for policy-makers, but we also know that we're looking at years and years of work in order to make the findings of this conference real and positive in the lives of all of our children. But this is a very exciting and enormous undertaking.

This research has opened a new frontier. Great exploration is, of course, not new to this country. We have gone across the land, we have gone across the globe, we have gone into the skies, and now we are going deep into ourselves and into our children. In some ways, this may be the most exiting and important exploration of all.

I'm proud of the role that federally-funded research has played in these findings in discovering that the earliest years of life are critical for developing intellectual, emotional and social potential. We all know that every child needs proper nutrition and access to health care, a safe home and an environment; and we know every child needs teaching and touching, reading and playing, singing and talking.

It is true that Chelsea is about to go off to college, but Hillary and I have been blessed by having two young nephews now -- one is about two and one is about three -- and we're learning things all over again that, I must say, corroborate what the scientists are telling us.

We are going to continue to work on this, and I know that you will help us, too. Let me just mention two or three things that we want to work on that we think are important. We've got to do a lot more to improve the quality, the availability and the affordability of child care. Many experts consider our military's child care system to be the best in our country. I'm very proud of that, and not surprised.

The man responsible for administering the Navy's child care system, Rear Admiral Larry Marsh, is here with us today. He leads a system that has high standards, including a high percentage of accredited centers, a strong enforcement system with unannounced inspections, parents have a toll-free number to

call and report whatever concerns they may have, training is mandatory and wages and benefits are good, so, staff tends to stay on.

I am proud that the military places such importance on helping the families of the men and women who serve our country in uniform. But it's really rather elementary to know that they're going to do a lot better on the ships, in the skies, in faraway lands if they're not worried about how their children are faring while they're at work serving America.

To extend that kind of quality beyond the military, I am issuing today an executive memorandum asking the Department of Defense to share its success. I want the military to partner with civilian child care centers to help them improve quality, to help them become accredited, to provide training to civilian child care providers, to share information on how to operate successfully, and to work with state and local governments to give on-the-job training and child care to people moving from welfare to work.

I think this is especially important. Let me say in the welfare reform bill, we put another \$4 billion in for child care. In addition to that, because the states are getting money for welfare reform based on the peak case load in welfare in 1994, and we've reduced the welfare rolls by 2.8 million since then, most states, for a period of time until an extra session comes along, will have some extra funds that they can put into more child care. This gives states the opportunity they have never had before to train more child care workers, to use funds to help even more people move from welfare to work and perhaps even to provide more discounts to low-income workers to make child care affordable for them.

This welfare reform effort, if focused on child care, can train lots of people on welfare to be accredited child care workers and expand the availability of welfare in most of the states of the country. It's not true for every state, because some of them have had smaller drops in the case load and three have had no drops. But, by and large, the welfare reform bill, because of the way it's structured, gives all of you who care about child care about a year or two to make strenuous efforts, state by state, to create a more comprehensive quality system of child care than we have ever had before. And I certainly hope that what we can do here, plus the support of the military, we'll see dramatic advances in that regard.

I'd like to thank the people here who have done that work. And I'd like to say that we are going to hold a second conference, this one devoted exclusively to the child care issue here at the White House in Washington this fall. And I hope all of you who care about that will come back.

The second thing we want to do is to extend health care coverage to uncovered children. The budget I have submitted will extend coverage to as many as 5 million children by the year 2000 with the children's health initiative in the budget proposal -- to strengthen Medicaid for poor children and children with disabilities, to provide coverage for working families through innovative state programs, to continue health care coverage for children of workers who are between jobs. There is an enormous amount of interest in this issue in both parties, I'm happy to say, in the Congress in this session. And I quite confident that if we'll all work together, we can get an impressive expansion in health care coverage for children in this congressional session.

I'm pleased that Dr. Jordan Cohen, the President and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges is with us today to lend his association's strong support to these efforts. With the support of leaders in medicine, again I say, I am convinced we'll have a bipartisan consensus that will extend coverage to millions more uninsured children.

The third thing we want to do is this: Because we know the great importance of early education, we're going to expand Early Head Start enrollment by at least one-third next year. Early Head Start was created in 1994. It's been a great success in bringing the nutritional, educational and other services of Head Start to children aged three and younger and to pregnant women. It has been a real success and we need to expand it.

Today we are requesting new applications for early Head Start programs to accomplish the expansion. And to help parents to teach the very young, we developed a tool kit called, "Ready, Set, Read," part of our America Reads challenge, designed to make sure that every child can read independently by the 3rd grade. This kit gives tips on activities for young children. It's going out to early childhood programs all across the country along with a hotline number for anyone else who wants the kit.

The fourth thing we're going to do is to protect the safety of our children more. In particular, we have to help young children more who are exposed to abuse and violence. Let me tell you, as you might imagine, I get letters all the time from very young children. And my staff provides a significant number of them for me to read. The Secretary of Education not very long ago gave me a set of letters from children who were quite young, a couple of years ago gave me a set of letters from children who were in the 3rd grade. But sometimes I get them from kindergarten children and 1st grade children, talking about what they want America to look like.

And it is appalling the number of letters I get from five- and six-year-olds who simply want me to make their lives safe; who don't want to worry about being shot; who don't want anymore violence in their homes; who want their schools and the streets they walk on to be free of terror.

So, today the Department of Justice is establishing a new initiative called "Safe Start," based on efforts in New Haven, Connecticut, which you will hear about this afternoon. The program will train police officers, prosecutors, probation and parole officers in child development so that they'll actually be equipped to handle situations involving young children. And I believe if we can put this initiative into effect all across America, it will make our children safer. And I'm glad we're announcing it today during Victims of Crime Week.

We all know that it's going to take a partnership across America to help our children reach their full potential. But the toughest job will always belong to our parents -- first teachers, main nurturers. Being a parent is a joy and a challenge. But it's not a job you can walk away from, take a vacation from, or even apply for family leave from. (Laughter.) The world moves too fast, and today, parents have more worries than ever. Work does compete with family demands, and finding a balance is more difficult than before. That's why this must always be part of the public's business.

Let me come now to the bottom line. The more we focus on early years, the more important they become. We know that these investments of time and money will yield us the highest return in healthier children, stronger families and better communities.

Now, let me say, finally, I know that none of us who are in politics, none of us who are just parents, will ever know as much as the experts we're about to hear from today. But what they're going to tell us is the most encouraging thing of all, which is, they have found out that we can all do the job. No matter how young, a child does understand a gentle touch or a smile or a loving voice. Babies understand more than we have understood about them. Now we can begin to close the gap and to make sure that all children in this country do have that chance to live up to the fullest of their God-given potential.

Again, I thank you all for being here. I thank our experts, I thank the First Lady. And I'd like to ask Dr. David Hamburg to come up and sit there and take over the program.

David?

Thank you. (Applause.)



BACK TO THE TOP

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Reach Out & Read Announcement
New York City, NY
December 1, 1998

Thank you all. Thank you. Thank you so much. You know, I know that Pat [Schroeder, president and CEO of the Association of American Publishers] is very happy in her new job, but I for one really miss her in the Congress. She is somebody who can throw about five metaphors out in the space of six minutes that are all memorable -- you know, "ruffles on overcoats" and the like. She has brought to her public service, and now to her new position, the same kind of commitment to real issues and people's concerns that we so desperately need more of in our country, and I'm just delighted that she could be here with all of us today.

I'm also pleased to be at Bellevue. I received some briefing material, and I think that this is the oldest public hospital in the country. And I think we ought to applaud all the people at Bellevue for that.

I want to thank all of the speakers: I want to thank Mr. [Carlos] Perez [executive director of Bellevue Hospital Center] for inviting us here to gather to make this announcement; Dr. [Barry] Zuckerman [founding director of Reach Out & Read], whom I have known and admired now for a number of years -- I want to thank him for being the leader of Reach Out & Read and the real catalyst for so much of what has gone on around the country. Dr. [Leora] Mogilner [director of Reach Out & Read at Mt. Sinai Medical Center], I want to thank you for your work specifically here in the New York area. And I particularly want to thank Richard Robinson [president and CEO of Scholastic Corporation] for his commitment on behalf of Scholastic Corporation to making sure that the books that doctors and nurses and hospitals such as this need in order to give to families and children are made available.

I think that all of us who care about what happens in the early years of a child's life recognize how essential it is to do everything we can -- at whatever intersections we might be privileged to witness or be part of -- to create an environment in which a child and a family feel secure, given the attention that they need, and provided with the advice and the support that every new family needs. You know, it's something of a misconception that only families that might have more challenges than other families need this kind of support. I think all American families, given the kind of stresses that we live in in our time, with all of the pressures on working parents, whether it's two parents in a household, both working, or one parent working, or a single parent working, all that we know that goes on in the lives of most American families. We need to do all that we can to provide support and guidance. And we know that most parents will have some interactions with medical professionals, starting at their baby's birth and going forward for a couple of years at least. So that the brilliance behind Reach Out & Read was to recognize that that intersection where a professional could interact with a parent, a guardian, a child, over something like a vaccination, provided an opportunity to do even more.

Now we've always recognized, I think maybe intuitively, and certainly anecdotally, that reading to children seemed like a good idea. It certainly was gratifying for those of us who were lucky enough to be read to, and for those of us who continued that habit with our own children. There was just something very special about that time -- you know, holding a child, maybe cuddled up in a chair, or lying across a bed before the lights went out -- and reading a book or telling a story.

But certainly, as Pat and others have already referred to, we now know from the research that has gone on in the last several years how critical that kind of stimulation is to brain development. It used to be a good thing to do, that we thought was worthwhile. We now have empirical evidence about what it physically does to those synapses and those brain cells.

That was a real breakthrough, and it provided even more opportunity for physicians and nurses to say in their professional interactions, "You know, this is not only a nice thing to do. This will literally help your baby's brain grow."

So what became a great idea based on the observations and the research and work that was done starting some years ago in Boston, has now swept the country. Because clearly more and more parents are being reached by this information, even though we still have a long way to go. Most parents won't read scholarly journals, they might not watch programs in which this is reported, but they will listen to their doctor, they will listen to a nurse, they will listen to someone whom they believe has their child's best interest at heart. So filling that time with not only advice about vaccinations and other problems that a parent brings to you, but talking about the importance of reading and stimulating your child is something that is irreplaceable. And only those of you who take care of our children in institutions such as this and in community health centers and in private practice offices all over our country can really have that opportunity.

So about 20 months ago, after following Reach Out & Read and being very admiring of the work that was being done and the way that it was slowly spreading around our country, I was honored to host an event at the White House where publishers, and booksellers, and pediatricians, and librarians, and other dedicated citizens came together to try to create a national program. We called it the "Prescription for Reading Partnership," which was really a way of describing what Reach Out & Read does -- to prescribe reading to parents. And now we can report that we're serving more than 780,000 children in 47 states, and as you've already heard, the number of doctors who've been trained and the number of people like this coalition represent who've come together to do this has just grown by leaps and bounds.

So today, we are gathered to make an important next step in the national campaign to promote reading for children -- by launching the Reach Out & Read Coalition of Greater New York. Now there isn't any city in the world better known for its great publishing houses, its first-class hospitals, its community health centers, its nonprofit organizations. So we know that the resources are here to meet the dreams and aspirations of the Coalition founders and members. Already more than 100 organizations have joined. You have set an ambitious goal -- to

“prescribe” books to one million children in five boroughs, New Jersey, and Westchester by the year 2000, and to help prepare countless children for a better life in the future.

I’m also honored to announce today that Scholastic has expanded its generous commitment to our cause. And I want to thank Mr. Robinson and all of his colleagues. Scholastic is not only donating 50,000 books to Reach Out & Read, the coalition here in Greater New York, it is donating one book for every new child served by the program over the next five years. So if you go above the million mark, and you reach even more children, Scholastic will be there with a book for each child served. Scholastic is also extending its local challenge grant program to New York so that for every \$5,000 raised locally, 500 books will be given locally.

And, for every \$100,000 raised nationally, 5,000 books will be given nationally. And lastly, Scholastic will expand their multi-lingual book program, which I had the honor of announcing last April at the University of Chicago Hospital at an event such as this announcing the coalition in Chicago. I’ve lost track, Dick, of how many languages you already do. [Inaudible reply.] Ten languages, and now adding Bengali and Serbo-Croatian as a means to serve those growing communities here in New York. So, indeed, I want to join all of you in commending and thanking Mr. Robinson and Scholastic for contributing so much to the lives of our children.

I think you’ve heard from all of the speakers our deep concern about the growing literacy gap -- and by literacy we no longer mean just the ability to read well enough to get a job that doesn’t require a lot of reading, which used to be the old measurement, but we’re now looking at what it means to be literate, truly literate, in this new world that is being created by leaps and bounds every day through the electronic media.

If we do not do more to assist parents who have themselves limited education, low incomes, for whom English is not their primary language, to prepare their children, then that gap can only grow wider.

So we have to do more to level the playing field. We have to support programs like this, but also other high quality early childhood programs. We have to also make sure that children have access to computer literacy, so that they are not left behind by the children of people like us, who are very adept at using computers, and very comfortable with them.

So I’d also like to commend a new computer literacy program that is being launched here in New York today, thanks to some of the people here as well as their partners around the city. Over 10,000 pieces of software are being donated by U.S. Kids Compute in conjunction with the Learning Company. And First Book will in turn distribute the software across the country to improve access for children who, because of economic or other reasons, have little or no access to computers and educational software.

You know, I just spent Thanksgiving with my family, which includes a 3 ½-year-old

nephew, who has probably been read to so much he's sick of being read to. But he now operates his own little computer, he has his own little programs, he's writing little letters, he's learning all kinds of words. And we know, as Dick reminded us, that those words really go into that vocabulary bank which determines very much how children are viewed once they get to school and how they view themselves.

Any of you who have ever been in a classroom, in the first days or weeks of kindergarten or first grade, know that you have some children who come, like my nephew, probably taking his portable computer to kindergarten. And you have other children, who when the teacher passes out worksheets and says, "Circle the figure that's different," they don't know what circle means. I've been in classrooms where children have been asked to stand up and say their names, and some children only know their first names. So we know very well that by providing this kind of stimulation, and then providing the resources for the stimulation, we're going to be helping countless children just move forward a little further, a little faster, than they would have been able otherwise.

If you are involved in Reach Out & Read, and I hope every one of you has a chance to be -- not only Bellevue, but Mt. Sinai, all the hospitals and health centers represented here -- you truly will see what we've already heard reported: you will see lives changed. You will also have a way of interacting with your patients and their parents that maybe wasn't available to you before. I've had a lot of doctors tell me, Barry [Zuckerman], that it's really changed the way they relate to patients and to parents and to families. And even in this time of increased pressures on physicians and managed care restrictions, there isn't any substitute for spending time with a family, with a patient, with a parent, and trying to create that bond of trust, and then trying to leave something that can continue on after they leave the office.

So I am excited about what you are doing here, and the consequences that I know will flow from it. And I want to congratulate all of you who have worked so hard to launch this new Reach Out & Read partnership. I'll look forward to hearing the results -- both the empirical ones and the anecdotal ones -- in the months and years ahead. Because you're going to be literally changing lives as much as you will be when you provide a well-child check-up or give a vaccination. So I want to thank all of you.

And I want to thank those who, like Barry, conceived of this idea, which sounds so simple, but has such profound implications for families, for children, and for our collective future. Thank you very much.