

A doctor. A family. A book.



*A simple solution that starts
with reading aloud.*

Annual Report 2016

Celebrating 10 years of stories



where great stories begin™

2006-2016

Reach Out and Read gives young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric care and encouraging families to read aloud together.



Looking back over this year, I am impressed with the progress Reach Out and Read-Alabama has made in turning the early literacy dial, but also how much more we could do if every pediatric practice and clinic in this state were funded to prescribe books to young children.

As a practicing pediatrician, I know the value of this program and the impact it has on families. The value goes so much further than just the book. When we prescribe a book to a child, the parents and/or caregiver understand the value of the written word and together can experience language development. This empowers parents to be their child's first teacher and engages them from birth as they guide their child down the path of success in learning and life. There is also value in the moments that they spend with their child as they share each book together.

These moments are essential in emotional bonding and help cement the nest we call family.

In August, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a new policy statement: *The Pediatrician's Role in Optimizing School Readiness*. With the ten-year anniversary of our Reach Out and Read program in Alabama, more than 300 of our pediatricians who prescribe books each day know the value of our role in preparing children for school. The policy is very straightforward in emphasizing our role in helping parents navigate the path to school readiness: "Cognitive and language skills are fostered through timely identification of developmental problems and appropriate referrals for services, including early intervention and special education services; guidance regarding safe and stimulating early education and child care programs; and promotion of early literacy by encouraging language-rich activities such as reading together, telling stories, and playing games."

Thank you to those of you who have believed in the value of this program through your gifts. Investing in Reach Out and Read-Alabama is investing in families--there's no better value in the life of a child.

WHY DOCTORS?

Medical providers have **early access** to families and are a **trusted source** of information.

91% of children under age 5 see their doctor at least once a year.



By embedding our model in the existing **healthcare system**, we keep costs down, making our model **cost-effective** and scalable.

Catherine L. Wood MD, FAAP

Catherine L. Wood, MD, FAAP
President, Alabama Chapter-American
Academy of Pediatrics

The Reach Out and Read Model is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

1 EDUCATION

Pediatricians trained in our model of early literacy development provide parents with age-appropriate **guidance** about books and reading at regular pediatric visits.

3 ENGAGEMENT

Parents incorporate advice received from pediatric visits and make reading aloud part of their **daily routines**.



2 BOOKS

From **infancy** through **five** years, the child is given a brand new **book** to take home.

4 SCREENING

The book is given at the beginning of the visit and used as a **developmental surveillance tool**.

In 2014, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a landmark policy statement promoting literacy as ***“an essential component of pediatric primary care for all children.”*** The policy references Reach Out and Read as an effective intervention to engage parents and prepare children to achieve their potential in school and beyond.

This statement realized a long-term aim of Reach Out and Read to integrate early literacy promotion as a routine practice in health check-ups.



66% of children grow up in families that do **NOT** read aloud daily.



In low-income areas, only **1 book** is available for every **300 children**.

OUR IMPACT



We reach **110,400** families every year.



Over **300** medical providers participate in our program.



We give out **160,000** new books annually.



We have **62** program sites across the state.

By the age of **3**, low-income children have heard **30 million fewer words** than their more affluent peers.

A doctor.



According to Dr. Seuss in *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!*, “The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you’ll go.” That’s a philosophy Brewton pediatrician Marsha Raulerson, MD, FAAP can easily get behind.

“We’ve given out truckloads of books to our patients,” Dr. Raulerson said. “I give a book to every child for every visit, no matter what the age of the child. My community probably contributes about \$10,000 a year so we can buy a new book for every patient.”

In fact, no child who visits Dr. Raulerson’s clinic leaves empty-handed. The books she chooses for her patients are not only age-appropriate, but also story-appropriate to each patient’s particular situation. The majority of her patients have special needs, and each book is intended to give her patients hope.

*“My feeling is that if you can read, you can do anything.
If you can read, you can do anything you want!”*

Dr. Raulerson laughed when she first realized how long she had been practicing in Brewton, and how many patients had come through her clinic. She shook her head and smiled when she admitted that it didn’t initially dawn on her just how many generations of patients she had treated. She is now distributing books to the third generation of children that relies on her practice for medical care and literacy advice.

“I have grand-patients!” she laughed. “I have lots of families of three generations of patients, and I remember them all. All my patients are so special to me, and they’ve all received so many books from the clinic. Now, when they tell me that those books helped to create a special bond with their children and grandchildren, that’s heartwarming.”

Many of those former patients as well as current ones celebrated this summer with Dr. Raulerson at her program’s 20-year anniversary. Beginning in December 1996 as the third pediatric practice in the country to implement the nationwide program, Dr. Raulerson has now prescribed over 50,000 brand-new books to the children in her practice.

“Providing books to my patients and showing families how to use the book with their children has been shown to increase their reading readiness by almost six months,” Dr. Raulerson said. “The books they receive from me at each visit is integral to the literacy development of my patient population.”



The Family Health Center at Eight Mile, one of nine Mobile County Health Department Clinics, serves this unincorporated community that has a median income of only \$35,000 for a family of four, about \$8,000 below the median income of the state. With 90 percent of their children receiving their healthcare through Alabama Medicaid, the clinic has prescribed more than 8,000 books through Reach Out and Read-Alabama. In the following interview, Tonya Dobbs, MD, FAAP, their program's medical consultant, stresses the impact of Reach Out and Read-Alabama on the school readiness of children she serves each day.

How does Reach Out and Read-Alabama prepare the children in your practice to start school?

When the children start receiving books early in their life and their parents and/or caregivers share that book with them every day, it increases their language development. We know that research on early brain development shows that early experiences with books and strong family relationships directly impact brain development and function.

Why is it important that you prescribe a brand-new, age-appropriate book at their check-ups?

Kids love having the books and they are wonderful tools to encourage the parents to spend quality time with their children, devoid of technology. Many of our parents and caregivers live in poverty with limited resources. These families struggle to find the resources for food and their transportation needs. Providing books and encouraging parents to read together also empowers the parent to be their child's first teacher.

Do you have a story about one of your patients that illustrates the impact of the program on language development and school readiness?

We have a little boy that gets really excited about coming to the doctor for his check-up because he knows he's going to get a book. One of the books we prescribed helped him learn the different animals and animal sounds. His Mom noticed how he was pronouncing words better after sharing the book together. Each time he came for an appointment, even for a sick visit, he wanted to get a book to go out and read with because he was excited about learning and reading. We love that! We love to hear that from our families.

“Pediatric providers can promote the 5 Rs of early childhood education by encouraging parents to read together daily as a favorite family activity that strengthens family relationships and builds language, literacy, and social-emotional skills that last a lifetime.”

A family.

Extensive peer-reviewed research shows that in families served by Reach Out and Read:



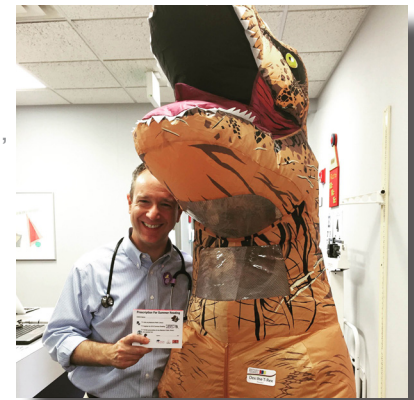


Thanks to new funding in 2015-2016, pediatric healthcare providers in every county in Alabama can refer children with developmental delays through Help Me Grow-Alabama (HMG) and speak with a care coordinator who can answer questions, connect them to services, follow up to ensure a connection is made and enroll them in developmental surveillance once developmental screening is completed. To bolster these efforts, HMG Care Coordinators are partnering with Reach Out and Read-Alabama to contact Reach Out and Read practices in each of the nine regions throughout the state to share how HMG can benefit their practice.

“Pediatricians can benefit from Help Me Grow because they can make referrals for children who have been identified as needing services through developmental screening,” said Madeleine Blancher, MD, FAAP, Alabama Chapter-AAP, Early Childhood Champion. **“Another important developmental program that we highly support in Alabama is Reach Out and Read**, which allows parents who have to work outside the home ‘alone time’ each day with their child. This time together each day helps build secure attachments that are important for healthy social and emotional development as they prepare for success in school.”

According to the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, one of the three solutions to help parents promote their children’s readiness for school is summer reading. As their children’s first teacher, brain builder, tech navigator, advocate and coach, parents set the stage for success in the early years and early grades. Parents can best ready children for school, establish good school attendance habits and prevent summer learning loss.

Reach Out and Read-Alabama’s summer reading events throughout the state provided a fun opportunity with activities to keep parents engaged in reading daily to their children during the summer months.



Participating since the inception of Reach Out and Read-Alabama’s summer reading event seven years ago, Dothan Pediatric Healthcare Network providers devise a plan that provides a fun opportunity for their patients and activities to keep parents engaged in reading daily to their children during the summer months.

“Reading has already been shown to be the best tool to prepare kids for school - so there can be no better way to help them stay engaged in the summer. Daily reading has also been shown to boost standardized test scores - and being immersed in a good story has the added benefit of warding off summer boredom. Need I say more?” said Nola Earnest, MD, FAAP, pediatrician at Dothan Pediatric Healthcare Network’s Enterprise location.



Read and Romp engages children and their families with learning-based activities themed around favorite children’s books. At the inaugural event in Tuscaloosa and the sixth annual event in Birmingham, children left with goodies that they either created or earned by completing each station along with a stamped passport and a bag of brand-new books. By associating fun-filled activities with reading, parents learned ways to engage with their child on the lifelong journey of learning at an early age, which will help increase their children’s success in school.

2016 Donors

Reach Out and Read-Alabama gratefully acknowledges the following corporations, foundations, and individuals who generously contributed to our statewide efforts between November 1, 2015 and December 15, 2016.

On behalf of the children and families who discovered the transformative power of reading, we thank you for being committed partners in our mission to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric care so that children start school prepared to achieve their potential.

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“Prescribing a book during each check-up gives us the opportunity to connect with parents and create a partnership in the lifelong journey of learning for their child.”

*Michelle Freeman, MD, FAAP, Reach Out and Read Medical Coordinator
Dothan Pediatric Clinic*