OUR MISSION
Ready Readers inspires preschool-age children from low-income communities to become readers by reading aloud to them, increasing their exposure to quality books, and providing literacy-related experiences.

WHERE YOUR GIFT GOES
$5,000 provides our program in one school for one year.
$1,500 provides our program in one classroom for one year.
$750 provides our program in one classroom for one semester.

OUR VISION
All children who participate in the Ready Readers program enter kindergarten with the skills to be ready to read, as defined by state early learning standards.

$250 provides gift books to one classroom of children for one year.
$80 provides our program for one child for one year.

OUR CORE VALUES
Education and Learning
Service
Joyful Experiences
Respect and Kindness
Collaboration
Wise Stewardship of Resources

Your gift matters
READY READERS is funded solely through the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations throughout the St. Louis area. Your tax-deductible gifts enable us to offer a large — and growing — variety of early literacy programs.

To donate, visit readyreaders.org
Once upon a time, a small group of St. Louisans banded together to spread the joy of reading to children in low-income communities. By bringing books into classrooms — to read and to share — these faithful volunteers started a movement to help prepare young minds for a lifetime of learning. Today, their tiny little book club is the biggest in St. Louis! Ready Readers volunteers share stories with 10,000 children each week and give away thousands of gift books to kids and classroom teachers every year. Ours is a shared story of dreams, dedication and devotion to kids — now 20 years in the making.
what happens when we share stories?

Do you recall having a favorite book as a child? What was the book? Who read it to you? How did hearing that story make you feel? How does that memory make you feel now?

When we share stories, we share so much more than words on a page. We share time, laughter, joy and love. We share a moment of learning, discovering something new — together.

Every week, 500 Ready Readers volunteers share stories with 10,000 preschool-age children from low-income communities throughout the St. Louis area. The same volunteer reads to the same classroom for the entire school year, creating strong bonds between the children, volunteer and teacher — all centered around a love of books.

As Ready Readers celebrates 20 years serving the St. Louis community, we remember our shared times reading to young children. It is our sincere hope that — as they grow older — our children will cherish our time together as moments of love, discovery and joy, and that they will value reading as a true source of pleasure in their lives.

To reach additional children across our community, Ready Readers this year led a new literacy initiative: Turn the Page STL. This coalition of St. Louis City and County governments, local libraries and other literacy groups aims to help more children read at or above grade level by third grade — because kids who read succeed.

Learn more at visionforchildren.org/recc/turnthepage.

Thank you for sharing our story and supporting early literacy in our community.

Gratefully yours,

LISA GREENING
Executive Director

MATTHEW LEPPERT
President
Each year, our volunteer readers get an earful from the young learners in their classrooms.

“The children are so excited to see me and always ask for more stories.”

“The children often discuss with me the books they have at home. They greatly appreciate receiving the books I hand out to them.”

“They asked if we could repeat some of the activities that I used to supplement a book. They could relate books we read to others from earlier in the year or last year.”

Our favorite stories are those that involve other grown-ups.

“The week after Gift Book Day, when I would ask the children who had been reading the book to them at home, they were all eager to tell me exactly who was reading the book with them and what they liked about it.”

Moms, dads, grandmas, aunts … the more family members that read to children as they grow, the better!

Through our classroom visits and gift book programs, kids discover that reading is fun, whether at school or at home. They open their minds to new words and new worlds, while building a foundation for future learning.
another year, another happy ending

Progress. That’s what we look for in our classrooms each and every year. So we engage an independent evaluator to sit down with a sample of children in our program at the beginning of the school year and again at the end. We want to know, “Did Ready Readers have an impact on their emergent literacy skills?” The answer again this year is emphatically, “Yes!”

Increases in exposure to and engagement with books and reading. At the end of the year, children were more likely to identify a favorite book or to report being read to at home and at school.

Gains in pre-reading skills. When the year concluded, higher percentages of children could correctly identify their printed names or specific letters in their names, and could distinguish words from pictures.

Improvements in reading-related behaviors. By year’s end, children demonstrated increased ability to hold a book and turn pages correctly, and were more likely to pretend to read a book they selected.

Our research found:

- Children who reported being read to at home or school:
  - Beginning of year: 83%
  - Year end: 96%
  - Increase: 13%

- Children who correctly identified their first names:
  - Beginning of year: 76%
  - Year end: 87%
  - Increase: 11%

- Children who could distinguish words from pictures:
  - Beginning of year: 62%
  - Year end: 69%
  - Increase: 23%

- Children who pretended to read a book:
  - Beginning of year: 32%
  - Year end: 60%
  - Increase: 48%

More from our kids:

- Recognized at least four Ready Readers books:
  - 94%

- Recalled content from one or more of the books:
  - 96%

- Identified a favorite book title or subject:
  - 93%

“The difference between the beginning of the year and now, as far as enthusiasm, attentiveness, and behavior in the children is profound.”

— Ready Readers Volunteer

YEARS OF SHARED STORIES

CHILDREN WHO REPORTED BEING READ TO AT HOME OR SCHOOL

CHILDREN WHO CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED THEIR FIRST NAMES

CHILDREN WHO COULD DISTINGUISH WORDS FROM PICTURES

CHILDREN WHO PRETENDED TO READ A BOOK

MORE FROM OUR KIDS

94% 96% 93%
When trying to ignite a passion for reading in a room full of preschoolers, it helps to have a few tricks up your sleeve. At Ready Readers, we’ve studied all kinds of ways to encourage early literacy, and we share those insights regularly with two key groups of influencers: our volunteer readers and teachers.

FOR CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS, WE OFFER:
- Comprehensive orientation
- On-site mentoring
- Monthly e-newsletter
- Online resources
- Professionally developed in-person workshops
  - Bringing Ready Readers Gift Books to Life!
  - Integrating Music, Rhythm and Movement into Your Read-Aloud Sessions
  - Helping Children Learn: How Toxic Stress Affects Our Students
  - Smaller Reader Café sessions
  - Songs, Fingerplays and Games Kids Love
  - My Three Favorite Read-Alouds
  - Make It and Take It

FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS, WE OFFER:
- Literacy-based, state-approved, clock-hour workshops
  - The Magic of Turning Favorite Read-Alouds into Curriculum
  - Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) in MY classroom? YES!
  - Helping Children Learn: Reducing the Effects of Trauma and Toxic Stress by Developing Emotional Literacy

empowering volunteers & teachers to keep the stories coming

The more we all know about engaging young learners, the greater our impact will be. Let’s work together to spread our shared love for literacy!
happily sharing books by the thousands with our favorite friends

Giving high-quality books to kids and their teachers is a cornerstone of the Ready Readers program. As we mark 20 years of serving classrooms across our region, we celebrate a brand new high in total giving. To date, Ready Readers has given away 646,500 gift books!

Through the support of our generous sponsors, Ready Readers supplied nearly 70,000 new, high-quality gift books to children in the 2016-2017 school year alone. Amazing!

BONUS BOOKS FOR VOLUNTEERS

This year, through a generous gift from the Finerty Family Foundation, our classroom readers received their own set of gift books to keep. Titles include: The Little Red Hen, The Town Mouse & the Country Mouse, Three Little Kittens, and Three Bears. Brand new volunteer readers received a fifth gift book to share with their class: The Neighborhood Sing-Along.

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At Ready Readers, we deliver book-based adventures to children inside the classroom and out. This year, we’re expanding our free literacy-themed field trips to include:

- The Magic House
- Missouri History Museum
- Powell Symphony Hall
- Humane Society of Missouri
- Public Libraries
- St. Louis Science Center

In honor of our 20th year, we’ve taken time not only to reflect on where we’ve been, but also to decide where we’re headed next. Last fall, we engaged an outside firm to help us develop a 2020 Strategic Plan.

We continue to seek new partnerships and new ways of spreading our passion for early literacy programs. Recent collaborations include:

- Participation on the governing board of the St. Louis Regional Early Childhood Council, the Five by Age Five Board of the 241 Normandy Collaborative, and the St. Louis Public School Early Childhood Education Advisory
- Partnership with Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments and Kids Vision For Life St. Louis to help children with impaired vision.
- Partnership with KIPP Schools to help identify children for the schools’ kindergarten program
- Coordination of quarterly meetings among 13 St. Louis early literacy organizations to review services currently provided, overlap between services, and needs still to be met
- Formation of Turn the Page STL – St. Louis’ first city-countywide literacy initiative, funded through a grant from Youthbridge and the Dana Brown Charitable Trust.

It’s never too early to begin reading to children. So this summer, Ready Readers piloted a program targeting our youngest audience ever: ages 0–24 months. Our team put together new training materials and supplied board books to two volunteer readers, who read for one hour a week in two classrooms at the Fiance Center.

Last April, on Child Advocacy Day, Reader Readers Executive Director Lisa Greengrill traveled to Jefferson City to receive the 2017 Child Advocacy Award for Business Leadership from the state of Missouri. This honor recognizes the importance of early literacy and strengthens Ready Readers’ resolve to work in the interests of children in low-income communities throughout our region.

EXCITED BY OUR BIG PLANS, WE WENT RIGHT TO WORK! HERE ARE THE INITIATIVES NOW UNDERWAY:

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION
BOARD ENGAGEMENT
INCOME
PROGRAM EXPANSION
COLLABORATION & ADVOCACY

TOGETHER, WE OUTLINED FIVE KEY AREAS OF FOCUS FOR READY READERS:

MORE FREE FIELD TRIPS
BOOK-A-DAY PROGRAM DOUBLED
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TIES
READING TO TOTS, AGE 2 AND YOUNGER
RENEWED COMMITMENT TO ADVOCACY
DONATIONS JULY 1, 2016 – JUNE 30, 2017

$9,999–$5,000

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Bob and Sharon Black...
If you’re reading this annual report, chances are you’ve bolstered Ready Readers’ work in some way, perhaps as a volunteer sorting and packing books, as a classroom reader, or as a donor. If so, you’re a BIG part of our story. We couldn’t write a single chapter without the support of people like you, who share our belief in the power of early literacy.

Ready Readers Values Volunteers

The dedication and heart we see in our volunteers is simply too great to measure. But if we were to put a price tag on their work, it’s easy to see the value volunteers bring to our mission.

**Literacy Society Gifts Matched by Anonymous Donor**

Literacy Society members contribute an annual individual gift of $1,000 or more to Ready Readers. For the second year in a row, an anonymous benefactor matched the gifts of new Literacy Society donors. We are humbled by — and grateful for — this generous support of our programs.

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- Maria Zschoche

We are grateful for all of your donations. We apologize if we have omitted anyone or misspelled any names.
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THANKS TO OUR 2016-2017
BOARD & STAFF

FINANCIALS
For Year Ended June 2017

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS
Cash and Cash Equivalents $575,903
Pledges Receivable 10,000
Book Inventory - Program 76,272
Book Inventory - Other 6,876
Prepaid Expenses 3,985
Property and Equipment, Net of Accumulated Depreciation 19,934
Total Assets $692,970

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS
Liabilities
Accrued Liabilities $20,128
Deferred Rent $7,829
Total Liabilities $27,957

Net Assets
Unrestricted 431,013
Board Designated Endowment 169,200
Temporarily Restricted 64,880
Total Net Assets 665,013

Total Liabilities and Net Assets $692,970

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

SUPPORT AND REVENUES
Contribution Revenue $460,830
Special Events 234,791
In-kind Contributions 23,819
Interest Income 917
Other Income 1,198
Total Support and Revenues $721,555

EXPENSES
Program Services $482,503
Management and General 106,550
Fundraising 78,760
Total Expenses $667,813

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS 53,742

NET ASSETS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR 611,271
NET ASSETS AT THE END OF THE YEAR $665,013

64% CONTRIBUTION REVENUE
32% SPECIAL EVENTS
4% OTHER
72% PROGRAM SERVICES
16% MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL
12% FUNDRAISING

20 YEARS OF SHARED STORIES

FINANCIAL REPORTS

22 | READY READERS 2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT
2017 is a year to reflect on our history and to honor all those who’ve made Ready Readers what it is today. We kicked things off with a 20th anniversary party at the Ready Readers office in January, bringing together old friends from our early years and new friends who are continuing our legacy of literacy programs today.

20TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

In April, Ready Readers honored volunteers in a ceremony that included an address by our founder Pat Simons, a 20th anniversary video, a live performance from Metro Theatre and prizes for those in attendance. In addition, we presented awards for several of our outstanding volunteers:

- 2017 Distinguished Long-Term Reader: Lesley Wandling
- 2017 Outstanding Community Partner: Robert Becker, Kirkwood Youth Service
- 2017 Exceptional Volunteer of the Year: Candice Barchenger
- 2017 Outstanding Corporate Partner: Allison Devitre & Joan Rejda-Heath, Monsanto

Volunteer Appreciation & Awards

In the spring, Ready Readers hosted two separate celebrations for groups instrumental to our success: volunteers and early educators.

Early Educators Appreciation Event

Also in April, Ready Readers — together with ARCHS, United 4 Children, and Child Care Aware of Eastern Missouri — honored more than 200 local early childhood educators who work with children in low income communities. The event, held at the St. Louis Science Center, included brunch, an awards ceremony, flowers and early literacy resources. Educators also had an opportunity to explore all the exciting adventures offered at the Science Center.

It’s been said that it takes a village to raise a child. At Ready Readers, we believe the children in our “village” are blessed to have these committed adults working classroom by classroom, week by week, to share the joy of reading and to inspire a lifetime of literacy. Our sincere thanks to you all.
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To donate, visit readyreaders.org

Ready Readers
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St. Louis, MO 63132
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info@readyreaders.org
readyreaders.org