



Among the **community outreach efforts** taking place this past year, RSR volunteers and staff celebrated Dr. Seuss Day and visited local childcare centers and elementary schools to celebrate the author's birthday and promote the importance of reading.

## What They're Saying...

**"My tutor reads with me and makes learning fun."**

*Student benefitting from RSR tutoring*

**"As with many activities, I may go with obligation, but with this I come away VERY BLESSED."**

*RSR Star Readers Volunteer*

**"Gracias por el programa les encatno."**

*("Thanks for the program; I love it.")*

*Parent of RSR student*



## Community Innovation Zone Partnership

RSR participated as a partner in the Community Innovation Zone (CIZ) Grant that was awarded to the BCIU. In its final year of the three year term, efforts focused on increased promotion of literacy skills within Reading School District. Raising a Reader was expanded to Pre K, kindergarten and first grades at Glenside Elementary, as well as kindergarten, first and second grades at Tyson-Schoener Elementary and added 16 Head Start classrooms across 5 centers, and 2 PreK Counts classrooms.

**WOW!**

We share special recognition with the following RSR tutors who have volunteered since the initiative's inception and are returning for their 7th year:

Susan Bear, *Community Volunteer*  
 Barbara Futrick, *Community Volunteer*  
 Martha Goldstein, *UGI Energy Services*  
 Carol Gunzelman, *Community Volunteer*  
 Barbara Hall, *Community Volunteer*  
 Mary Beth Mancias, *FirstEnergy Corporation*  
 Thomas McMahon, *Community Volunteer*  
 Rosemary Schaeffer, *Penske Truck Leasing Co.*  
 Sandra Schlegel, *Community Volunteer*  
 Dr. Lori Smith, *Community Volunteer*

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 Daniel Boone Area School District  
 Exeter Township School District  
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 Hamburg Area School District  
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 KinderCare Learning Center  
 Kutztown Area School District  
 Kutztown University  
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## Community Impact Ready.Set.READ! Staff

Tammy White  
*President, United Way of Berks County*

### Community Impact:

Diane Fiorentino  
 Kristin Gehris  
 Alicia Hartman  
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 Cindy Line  
 Dr. Yamil Sanchez Rivera  
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*For additional information about Ready.Set.READ!, contact Cindy at [cindy@uwberks.org](mailto:cindy@uwberks.org). To learn more about RSR volunteer opportunities contact Darby at [darby@uwberks.org](mailto:darby@uwberks.org)*

Santander Bank  
**Tompkins VIST Bank\***  
 Travelers Insurance Co.  
**UGI Companies\***  
 Weis\*  
 Wells Fargo

*\* Organizations generously providing United Way with Educational Improvement Tax Credit Contributions.*  
*In 2017, these organizations made a total of \$96,000 in contributions.*



# Ready.Set.READ! ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18



Ready.Set.READ! (RSR) is designed to increase early grade reading proficiency to better position children for greater academic and future success. This initiative is managed by United Way of Berks County and involves leadership and commitment of partners from all sectors of the community - business, education, faith, service providers and volunteers.

This report highlights the initiative's progress and impact during the 2017/2018 school year.

We encourage you to learn more at ReadySetReadBerks.org and stay connected through our social media.

## Ready.Set.READ! Highlights

During the past year we engaged with **Lectio**, a Boston area-based consulting organization with expertise in community literacy programs, to advance the quality of Ready.Set.READ!. Lectio worked with RSR stakeholders to guide analysis around program design, resources and goals.

As part of the Lectio work, an objective was established to **standardize the Star Readers program within the 12 school districts and 29 elementary schools**. Consensus among districts was reached around developing common program goals and an assesment method. The agreed upon goals of Star Readers are to: increase student interest in reading and increase student vocabulary to improve meaning-based skills. A pre- and post-student survey will capture the interest level. To measure



progress in building vocabulary, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test will be used at the beginning and end of the school year. Program standardization across school districts is key to continuing the work of RSR with fidelity. As these program changes are incorporated, we expect to see advancement towards the goals.

RSR works with Reading childcare centers focusing on developing literacy skills with preschool children. New in 2017, the **Early Childcare Provider Training Incentive Program**, was established in partnership with RACC and sponsored by Brad and Barbara Hall, longtime United Way and RSR supporters. The program centers on increasing kindergarten readiness by improving the skills and retention of childcare teachers. Retaining staff creates stronger interactions between the teachers and the children. The 24-week training program increases the quality of teaching in the classroom. In the first year, 10 candidates from Norma de Hoyas' Daycare 2, Second Street Learning Center and YMCA earned their credentials, based on a nationally recognized certification. A new cohort of 12 candidates will participate in 2018/19, with a third cohort in the following year.



### Tackling **summer learning loss, or "summer slide"**, led

to mulitple efforts this past year. Summer learning loss describes what happens when students lose academic skills over the summer months. According to the National Summer Learning Association (NSLL), it is one of the most significant causes of the achievement gap between lower and higher income students. These learning losses can leave low-income students 2 ½ to 3 years behind their peers from higher-income families, and subsequently contributes to dropping out of high school.

### Did You Know?

- Kids from low-income homes lose 2 to 3 months in reading skills each summer.
- Those losses add up over time. While kids from middle to higher income homes make slight gains.
- By the end of 5th grade, the gap is between 2 and 3 years, and it continues to widen through middle school.

Number of RSR volunteer hours = 12,400

RSR convened the **Berks Summer Learning Coalition** and expanded literacy opportunities. The group compiled a county-wide summer learning activity directory housed via **2-1-1**, the community information and referral service. Varied promotional efforts shared the information with families and encougaged them to call 2-1-1, visit pa211east.org or text their zip code to 898211.

The summer literacy program, "**Books for Bikes**", was held for its second year in partnership with Berks Community Health Center, Customers Bank, the Reading School District and the Reading Housing Authority (RHA) for kids residing in the Oakbrook neighborhood. The program was designed to meet the needs of low-income children by engaging them in literacy-related activities on a daily basis around the neighborhood's Summer Food Service Program. It is estimated up to 100 children participated in the summer program, with more than 30 participating in at least 75% of the program days and earning a bike and helmet, **generously provided by Customers Bank**.



**Summer learning grants** totaling over \$37,000 were awarded to eight local organizations focusing on programming featuring a literacy component serving Berks County Title 1 students, up to and including 3rd grade. Recipients included:

- Antietam School District - Teachers in the Park
- Brandywine Heights Area School District - Summer Book Club
- Governor Mifflin School District - "Kindergarten Countdown" Program
- Olivet Boys & Girls Club - Caterpillar Butterfly Summer Literacy Program
- Opportunity House - "Gardening Across the Curriculum"
- Reading Public Library - Summer S.T.E.A.M. Program
- Reading School District - "Red Knights in Training" school readiness program
- Schuylkill Valley Community Library - "Avoid the (Summer) Slide & Leap into Summer"

**RSR awarded additional grants totaling \$15,000 to 10 Berks County schools to fund special literacy projects.** Recipients included: 10th & Penn Elementary School, Brecknock Elementary School, Conrad Weiser West Elementary School, Cumru Elementary School, Glenside Elementary School, Lauer's Park Elementary School, Mifflin Park Elementary School, Muhlenberg Elementary Center, Monocacy Elementary and Tyson-Schoener Elementary School.

**RSR and United Way is working with the Oakbrook community on issues, such as early grade reading.** Last year, a door-to-door survey was conducted to ask what Oakbrook residents listed as their needs. Nearly 40% of the 500+ households participated, and the results were shared through a Data Walk in October 2017. As part of the next steps, United Way has organized the **Oakbrook Collective Impact Council** to prioritize the identified needs and coordinate collaborative efforts. This is a multi-year process, and the group looks to address the root cause of an issue and works to create positive change.

## Ready.Set.READ! Programs and Impact

Nearly 37,000 kids (ages 0-8) benefitted from Ready.Set.READ! activities

### PROGRAM

### IMPACT

The **STAR READERS program** trained nearly 450 volunteer tutors to work with close to 500 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students in 29 elementary schools within 12 school districts to provide one-on-one tutoring support each week.

*During the past school year, students participating in Star Readers received 10,600 tutoring hours. (Data on academic progress is being compiled and will be shared when available.)*

**GROWING READERS** works with city childcare centers to improve curriculum development and staff retention.

*RSR provided nearly 200 coaching hours to support teachers in infant, toddler and preschool classrooms, infusing literacy education into daily instruction*

**RAISING A READER** centers on a home book-sharing routine at 5 elementary schools and 5 Head Start centers (54 total classrooms) to encourage family reading.

*Over 600 students participated, with each child exposed to an average of 50 books during the 17-week program. Families reported a total of over 7,000 hours of reading time. (Data based on survey responses.)*

Early literacy is incorporated into pediatric practices through **REACH OUT AND READ** and equips parents with tools to help children become prepared to learn when starting school.

*More than 30,000 books were shared with 15,000+ children as part of their well visits at area pediatrician offices (All About Children, Berks Community Health Center and Reading Health Children's Health Center).*

In partnership with Centro Hispano, **OPENING DOORS/ABIENDO PUERTAS** delivers parenting education programming, which is delivered by a trained faciiliator to interested parents. The program is designed by Latino parents, for Latino parents.

*Last year, more than 100 parents were trained through this program, impacting over 160 children.*

We partner with Yocum Institue for Arts Education to present **NEIGHBORHOOD BRIDGES** programming in four 3rd grade classrooms in several Reading School District elementary schools.

*RSR funding supported 120 students who received 45 hours of instruction from a trained teaching artist.*