

# Literacy program earns kudos

## Family Reading Partnership gets thumbs up from Newsweek

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ITHACA — The Ithaca-based Family Reading Partnership has garnered recognition in Newsweek magazine's "America's Best" feature for its work in the local community.

Since Executive Director Brigid Hubberman co-founded the partnership, "thousands of babies and children have books in their homes and enjoy the pleasures of reading with their families," reads the online nomination essay written by Ithaca resident and Family Reading Partnership volunteer Diane Lebo Wallace.

On Friday, shortly after Hubberman learned of the accolade, she reflected on how far the not-for-profit has come in the decade since it started giving books to all babies born at Cayuga Medical Center.

"It's a very nice honor that happens, I think, at a significant time in the organization," she said. "We really feel like we are moving toward a culture of literacy."

As the Newsweek piece mentions, the Family Reading Partnership is distinct from other literacy organizations in its breadth and philosophy. The organization provides books to families from all socioeconomic backgrounds, but it also emphasizes the value of reading aloud to children, even babies, as a regular family bonding activity.

The "Books at Birth" hospital program has spread to Cortland County and should soon appear in the Chemung Valley area, Hubberman said. The partnership has also established a book recycling project, provided books at regular doctor visits at all offices in the county that offer pediatrics, and held annual children's fairs and holiday book drives.

"I always think of Brigid when they talk about hometown heroes," Wallace said Friday, explaining that she was inspired to nominate Hubberman recently after reading similar profiles in a print version of Newsweek.

Wallace, a staff writer at Cornell University, said she has volunteered with the reading partnership for as long as it has been around, working on newsletters, helping with book sales and enlisting Girl Scouts to wrap gift books.

When she first heard Hubberman talk years ago about the importance of reading aloud with children, it inspired Wallace, she said, to do it at home more often than she already

was and maintain the tradition. Wallace and her 16-year-old daughter are now reading a “Harry Potter” book out loud together, she said.

The Newsweek profile isn't the Family Reading Partnership's first time in the national spotlight. According to Wallace's nomination, noted authors and a founder of the children's television show “Sesame Street” have praised the organization's creativity.

“The success of the Family Reading Partnership (happened) because almost every sector of the community has found a way to be involved,” Hubberman said, citing support from schools, libraries, businesses and religious organizations. “This isn't just an educational issue. It's a quality-of-life issue for the whole community.”

For more information about the Family Reading Partnership and its programs, call 277-8602 or visit [www.familyreading.org](http://www.familyreading.org).

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