



# At Home with Books

Feed me words!



FAMILY READING PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

Spring 2014

## Connected Together with a Caterpillar by Joe Wilensky

Family Reading Partnership’s newest initiative—*Every Baby! Every Day! Talk. Sing. Read. Play.*—has roots that go back 20 years. FRP’s beginnings, and the beginnings of its efforts to create a culture of literacy in Tompkins County, started with babies, the *Books at Birth* program and one magical book: Eric Carle’s “The Very Hungry Caterpillar.”

Now entering its 20th year, the *Books at Birth* program has gifted “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” to each baby born at Cayuga Medical Center since 1995—nearly 18,000 books! The program was FRP’s first effort at carrying a literacy message into the home through the gift of a book. Because all families received the same book, it also created a shared, universal community experience. The *Books at Birth* program (then called *Project First Book*) was also the first FRP partnership forged between business, health, and education, setting a template for many programs and initiatives to come. And it all started with a caterpillar.

The idea began with Brigid Hubberman (now FRP executive director, who was then working for TST BOCES’ *Family Reading Program*) and the book

itself. In fact, Hubberman says the book choice was “Caterpillar” from the beginning.

“We just sensed that it was our book, that it could grow with families,” Hubberman recalls. “It had something special about it, in the vibrant colors. It’s a

book that pulls you in. There’s a warmth about it, too, that our organization wanted to convey, about who we were—and are.”

That warmth is evident in how Carle himself has described the book: “Ultimately, this is a story about hope. That every living thing will grow up, be beautiful, and unfold its talents.”

### Investing in the Community’s Future

Hubberman set the new partnership in motion after she heard a Tompkins Trust Company radio commercial; their tagline was “investing in the future of our community.”

“Need I say more?” she says with a smile. “Once I heard that, I was certain, “They are really going to want to do this.”

Jim Byrnes, who at the time was president of the Trust Company, says the idea of giving books to all babies “really appealed to us as a community bank, and was a great fit with our long-time commitment to

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*The VERY BIG, very hungry caterpillar fabric creation by Mary Milne, was constructed for the 5th anniversary of giving the book to newborns at Cayuga Medical Center. It is shown here waiting to be a part of the Ithaca Festival Parade.*

Every time I pick up Jim Trelease's "The Read-Aloud Handbook," I'm struck by how practically he describes the wondrous process of learning: "As you read [and talk and sing] to a child, you're pouring into the child's ears (and brain) all the sounds, syllables, endings, and blendings that will make up the words that he or she will someday be asked to read and understand." Wow! Even in the first year, every word we say to a baby enriches the pathway to reading.

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## Director's Words



Brigid Hubberman,  
FRP executive director

Find the centerspread of this issue full of photos and the emerging story of *Every Baby! Every Day! Talk. Sing. Read. Play.*, our community-wide initiative that is bringing individuals and organizations together across all sectors with a powerful vision for social change. We are dedicated and determined to do whatever it takes to make sure that every baby in our community is surrounded by an abundance of words. After all, these babies are the promise of our future, and the stronger each of their foundations for language, literacy, learning, and love, the better they will do in school and life.

We realize we are charting new waters by setting a goal of reaching all babies, by promoting reading to babies even before birth, and by building even closer partnerships with those on the frontline working with low-income families with infants. As we learn and modify to strengthen our work, our confidence and commitment grows. This is where we need to be, we're doing this right, and there is no doubt we will be successful.

There is a saying that "you make the path by walking," and we are all walking together, making an extraordinary path that we intend to map well so that others can follow. Thanks for being on the journey with us!

*Brigid*

## Family Reading Partnership Core Programs

<p><b>Books Before Birth &amp; Books at Birth</b> Every expectant family receives a book at a pre-natal visit and another book from the hospital when their baby is born.</p> 	<p><b>Books to Grow On</b> Doctors give young families a book at six well visits with a prescription to "read to their children 20 minutes a day."</p> 	<p><b>Welcome to School Book</b> Kindergartners receive a new book at registration as a gift from their new school.</p> 	<p><b>Kids' Book Fest</b> The community comes together to celebrate children's books at this fun, annual event.</p> 	<p><b>"Read to Me" Banners &amp; Calendars</b> Reading together images are made into large banners and calendars to spread the message Read to Me!</p> 
<p><b>Bright Red Bookshelf</b> Gently used books are collected and placed on red shelves free for families to select and own.</p> 	<p><b>Traveling Books</b> Volunteers read to children at child care centers and homes and leave crates of books to be enjoyed.</p> 	<p><b>Give the Gift of Family Reading</b> Low-income families choose new books at the holidays to give as gifts to their children.</p> 	<p><b>Read-Along Songs</b> A set of 6 books and CD of the books being both read and sung are given to young children as a path to literacy through a new door.</p> <p><b>Read-Along Songs</b></p>	<p><b>Love Those Letters!</b> Pre-k and kindergarten students receive a book, DVD, and CD set of alphabet fun to use at home that is also used in classrooms.</p> 

**Our Mission: To create a culture of literacy in which all children have early, frequent, and pleasurable experiences with books, together with a loved one, as part of everyday family life.**

## Caterpillar Connection

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invest in the community.”

Cayuga Medical Center also got on board immediately.

Sue Brower, a registered nurse and clinical instructor at Cayuga Medical Center, has worked at the hospital for 28 years and has served as the *Books at Birth* coordinator there from its inception. In the early 1990s, Cayuga Medical Center had taken a stance against what had become the ubiquitous swag bag of commercial sample products given to new mothers—diapers, baby formula, baby lotion and coupons, accompanied by corporate-produced pamphlets of advice for new mothers and babies.

“We didn’t want to endorse any particular products,” Brower says. “We wanted to create our own educational materials to give new parents. We wanted to give them the right information and not something that was biased for a particular product.”

This was not what most hospitals in the region were doing

at the time, Brower says, and while CMC’s locally sourced and written materials were excellent, it did mean that the hospital was not giving new parents the armfuls of free goodies that many had come to expect as part of the hospital-birth experience.

So when FRP approached the hospital with the *Books at Birth* project, it was “fabulous for lots of reasons,” Brower says, “—not only because it’s great to share the information with families about why it’s important to read to a newborn, but we would be able to gift them something that was a really nice quality, that was presented in a really nice way. These were books that everybody loved from the beginning.”

Brower says the program, delivering the gift of a book even before new parents get home with a new baby, also takes advantage of a precious, and exquisite, moment in time.

The program, and the book, combined with the message that it’s never too

early to start reading to a baby, “is such a fabulous part of what we teach,” Brower continues. “In that little window of time right after a child is born, when parents are just studying every little inch of their baby, they are very ready to learn anything about what can make their baby healthy or happier. It’s a nice opportunity to give them really important information at a time when the baby is their entire focus.”

### “Caterpillar” Gift is Universal

It was crucial that the program be universal, Hubberman says: that the same book would be given to everyone, on the same occasion.

“We always understood the need for this to be a message for all,” she says. “That this wasn’t just for some people. Had we selected to only give the book to some families, there would have immediately been a stigma attached. We were creating a culture of literacy, and

that meant it was all of us, and we’d need everyone to carry this message to others.”

Now going into its 20th year, the *Books at Birth* program is part of a culture that has been reinforced and expanded by the literacy community FRP has helped create, from *Books to Grow On*, the annual *Kids’ Book Fest*, the *Read to Me!* banners and much more.

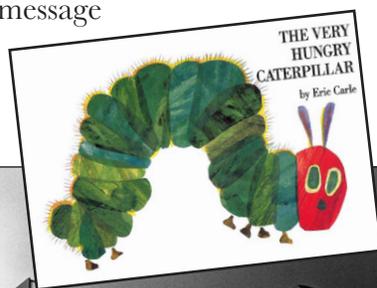
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On a recent visit to his museum of picture book art, Eric Carle sat for a photo in front of “The Very Eric Carle Quilt,” a gift from Family Reading Partnership in 2000. Made by local quilters, each square depicts one of Carle’s books.



One of the first babies to receive “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” at Cayuga Medical Center in 1995 was presented with the book by community partners Tompkins Trust Company, TST BOCES, and Cayuga Medical Center.



# Every Baby! Every Day! Talk. Sing. Read. Play.

A Community Campaign led by the Family Reading Partnership

What does it take ...  
begins life

## Community Commitment



Every Baby! Every Day! posters are appearing in windows of businesses, organizations, and homes throughout our community, reminding everyone to talk, sing, read, and play with the babies they know. (Download a poster at [www.familyreading.org](http://www.familyreading.org).)

## Modeling and Support



Baby Reading Buddy volunteers visit WIC sites, Early Head Start, and the Downtown Ithaca Childcare Center to give babies more talking, singing, reading, and playing and to model for families.

## Trusted Relationships



Community health nurses give "Read-Along Love Songs for Baby" sets of board books to parents in the M.O.M.S. program. At each home visit nurses encourage, support, and model giving babies lots of words, building on the relationships they already have with families.

*"When I can talk, sing, read, or play with a baby, it's the highlight of my day!"*  
~ Cheryl Mitchell, Baby Reading Buddy

## Words Everywhere!



When everyone knows to give babies words, even the check out at the grocery store is a place to say "hello!" to a baby!

to ensure that every baby in our community surrounded by an abundance of words?



## Early Inspiration



2-day-old Khimir received “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” when he was born at Cayuga Medical Center. The book came in a red book bag that his parents, Shakara and Ruel can use to bring more books home from the library to read to their baby.

## Resources and Encouragement



Cayuga Medical Center Maternal Health nurses give families a “Book at Birth” bookbag that now includes updated information that encourages families to talk, sing, read, and play with babies, right from the start.

## Community Partners

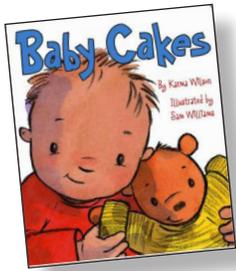


Nearly 100 people representing more than 50 organizations helped launch Every Baby! Every Day! in January. In a morning of brainstorming, participants generated ideas to deepen and strengthen efforts to inform, inspire, and support everyone in the community to give babies an abundance of words.



Organizations and individuals from every sector are committed to putting these ideas into practice across the community.

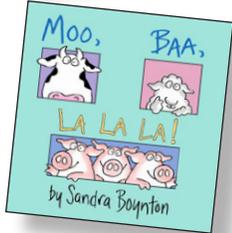
# Program Sponsorship Opportunities



## **Books to Grow On 2-Month Book**

**\$3,500** annually

We're excited to start giving this book, through pediatricians, to all families in our county with 2-month-old babies, to start the read-aloud tradition right from the start!



## **Books to Grow On 4-Month Book**

**\$3,500** annually

To reach children earlier with more books, we're also planning on giving 4-month-old babies a book through the *Books to Grow On* program at pediatrician offices. *(Read more about how we chose this book on page 8.)*



## **Read-Along Love Songs for Baby**

**\$14,000** annually

*(First year now funded!)*

This new program uses music, rhyming, and rhythm to invite and inspire families to enjoy words and books with their babies. Low-income, expectant parents and their babies receive a bright, spring-green cloth book bag filled with five beautiful board books and a CD of the books being both sung and read aloud by John Simon and Cal Walker. Sets are given by home visitors that already work with the families.



## **Books at Birth Book Bags**

**\$3,500** annually

The family of every baby born at Cayuga Medical Center receives their book at birth in a beautiful red cotton book bag with the message "Take Me to the Library" to use again and again. 900 bags (one year supply)

## **Read-Along Songs**

**\$18,000** annually

This highly successful program was funded for five years and now needs new sponsorship to continue. The set of six books and the accompanying CD of the books being read by Cal Walker and sung by John Simon is given to Pre-K and Head Start children each spring in a blue book bag. Books are used in the classrooms and at home, and John and Cal visit each school.



For further information about sponsoring a program in full or contributing in part, please contact:

Brigid Hubberman at [brigid@familyreading.org](mailto:brigid@familyreading.org) or 607-277-8602

## Family Reading Partnership Donation Form



Your contribution helps us continue to give books and read-aloud support to families in our community. **Thank you!**

\$50  \$100  \$500\*  \$1,000  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

You can also give online!

Visit [www.familyreading.org](http://www.familyreading.org)

Please charge my Visa/MC for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Card #             Expires \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional) My gift is in honor or in memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send a recognition card to: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make any corrections to your name/address on the other side of this page.

Mail form and donation to Family Reading Partnership, 54 Gunderman Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850

## The Conneman's Inspiration by Liz Kinast

**D**iane and George Conneman first learned of Family Reading Partnership when Diane heard Brigid speak about the benefits of families reading aloud to children. Inspired by Brigid's enthusiasm, Diane and George became sponsors of "Owl Babies," the first *Books to Grow On* book for 3-year-olds.

Through yearly updates on the program and other FRP projects, Diane explains, "a love affair developed." When *Read Along Love Songs for Baby* was introduced last year, George was smitten with "A You're Adorable" and the couple again sought to support a budding FRP program.

"We always encourage people

to support FRP," Diane says. "It feels like a gift that keeps giving and expanding as other communities start their programs, modeled after FRP. Each holiday season when we help give out books at WIC through *Give the Gift of Family Reading*, we see more benefits. Many families come in and point out books that their children have already received from their doctor through *Books to Grow On* or they will tell us about a child's favorite book. In our minds, it is evidence that FRP is building a culture of literacy."

Diane and George remember the fun of reading to their children. One summer when the family took a cross-country trip, Diane read

aloud several of the "Little House on the Prairie" books and they visited the restored homestead in Minnesota, bringing the story to life. George laughs and says, "On our family trip west, our daughter read all the Wall Drug signs!"

Thank you Diane and George for passing along your love of books to so many!



Diane and George Conneman

## Caterpillar Connection

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### Looking Ahead: Lots of Legs to Stand On

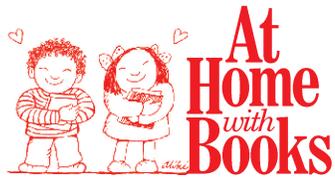
"The book is timeless and the program has really stood the test of time," says Greg Hartz, current president of Tompkins Trust Company. "To help children get off to a good start on the path to reading at an early stage is so foundational, and it is something Tompkins Trust Company is proud to have been part of since the

beginning."

Carle came to Ithaca in 2000 to participate in a community celebration for the program's fifth anniversary, which turned into a festival for Carle himself. Now, two decades later, Carle is pleased to know that the program is still going strong.

"I am honored to have had my book 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' selected by the Family Reading Partnership as one of the books given to new babies in Ithaca for the past 20 years," Carle

says. "I have fond memories of my visit to Ithaca and hearing over the years about the way this simple act of giving books to babies has had such a positive impact....reading with your young child, having your child sit on your lap, lets your baby and your child know that you care for them, have time for them and love them. In that way, sharing a book is much more than reading a story. Thank you, Family Reading Partnership, for making this possible for so many new families over the years."



www.familyreading.org

## Introducing...“Moo, Baa, La La La!”

by Elizabeth Stilwell

We are delighted that as part of our new initiative, *Every Baby! Every Day! Talk. Sing. Read. Play.*, we will be giving more books to all babies at earlier ages to promote reading to baby, right from the start. Every medical practice serving children in Tompkins County will soon be giving books at 2-month and 4-month well-child check-ups through our *Books to Grow On* program.

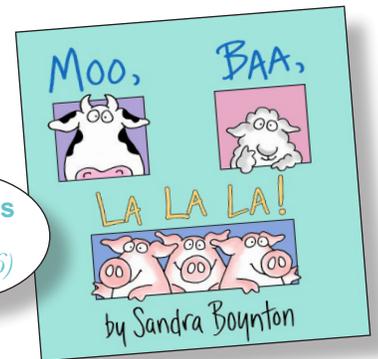
“Moo, Baa, La La La!” a favorite by Sandra Boynton, is our new book for 4-month-old babies. It was carefully chosen, as are all the books in this series, because it has a connection to what is

happening developmentally with babies at this age. At 4 months, babies are typically becoming very vocal. They are trying out lots of sounds, mostly those that begin with consonants. They love to practice strings of these new sounds, so “ba-ba-ba,” “da-da-da,” squeals, and giggles are all part of the lovely serenade that families hear as their babies experiment with producing language!

The more that babies are encouraged to be vocal, through playful engagement with adults who respond to and imitate their sounds, the more the babies “talk” back. This “call and response” is an important step on every baby’s journey towards language and literacy.

We hope that this book will invite families to engage in this special back and forth dance of language with their babies, as they enjoy reading the fun and playful “Moo, Baa, La La La!” together.

Fund this Book!  
(see page 6)



*Our Books To Grow On lineup is expanding! Babies will soon receive books at 2- and 4-month well-visits, in addition to the six books from 6 mo. to 4 years.*

Save the Date! Free Family Fun!

**Kids' Book Fest 2014**  
Saturday, November 8  
10am-4pm, Boynton Middle School

First planning meeting May 13, 3:45pm.  
Email [Suzie@familyreading.org](mailto:Suzie@familyreading.org) for more info.



Family Reading Partnership is delighted to partner with Family and Children’s Services of Ithaca to recognize Mental Health Month this May. Families will be able to choose and keep beautiful children’s books about feelings on any of the 45 Bright Red Bookshelves across Tompkins County.

Thank you to Sandy and Jay True and True Insurance for funding the books.

Pictured are Family and Children’s Services Director David Shapiro and his son, Clayton, age 5, holding the books “How are You Peeling?” and “Sometimes I’m Bombaloo.”