



# Bright Red Bookshelf™

“No children’s book should ever be lonely!”



## Welcome!

In this guide you will find comprehensive information about launching your own community program to give gently used children’s books to families modeled on the Bright Red Bookshelf as developed by the Family Reading Partnership in Ithaca, NY.

Included are an overview of the Bright Red Bookshelf program, information on planning and publicizing your shelf, the collection of books, how to prepare them, and finally how to distribute books on shelves in the community.

The Bright Red Bookshelf is a wonderful way to recirculate gently used children’s books back into the community for the use and enjoyment of children and families. Your Bookshelf program will help families make books part of everyday life together!

## Program Overview

The Bright Red Bookshelf program recirculates gently used children’s books back into the community where they are made available free for families to own. Books are collected in red crates at community locations and through book drives organized by service groups, congregations, campus organizations, and businesses. These books are then sorted, cleaned, affixed with a label, and set out on Bright Red Bookshelves at community locations, often sites where low-income families will have easy access to them.

### Program Objectives:

- Increase book ownership in families, particularly in resource-challenged homes
- Encourage parent-child interactions with books
- Involve community members in this literacy effort through book donations—as volunteers and as funders/sponsors
- Enhance the services of organizations serving as bookshelf hosts by providing books for the families they already serve
- Keep books circulating in the community so that “no children’s book is ever lonely”

Book ownership is important in fostering an interest in reading and a love for books. In order for parents to be able to read to their children, they need books close at hand; and, children feel pride in owning their own books. They develop confidence in reading and acquire mastery when books are easily within reach and can be read again and again. We believe that each book a child owns is an “appetizer” to library use.

**“When children have books at home,  
they are at home with books.”**

## **History of Program:**

The Bright Red Bookshelf began in the fall of 1997 as the premiere program of the newly formed Family Reading Partnership (FRP). The idea of collecting gently used books to place on a bookshelf for children to take for free evolved from discussions of how to ensure all families have access to books. It was met with enthusiastic support, especially from FRP founding member Jim Crawford who exclaimed, “Yes, and there has to be more than one shelf—and they have to be red!”

A number of volunteers helped with shelf construction, color selection, and logo design. In the spring of 1998, the first shelf was inaugurated at the downtown Ithaca Police Satellite Station, and soon five more were set up at other locations. A successful collection drive among local congregations, the first “Faith in Books” weekend in fall 1998, brought in 1,400 books for the shelves.

There are currently over 50 Bright Red Bookshelves in Tompkins County, NY which provide more than 10,000 books to families annually.

# **Planning Your Bookshelf Program**

## **Considerations:**

As you envision a program in your community based on the Bright Red Bookshelf program, you should think about the following considerations:

**Partners:** Who will they be? You need to work with others to make the program a success. Develop a support base with those who believe in the critical importance of families with young children enjoying books together.

Support and assistance that can be provided by partners include:

- Volunteers to do the work of the program
- Hosts offering their public location for collection crates and bookshelves
- Financial backers to fund shelves and other supplies
- Supporters with advisory assistance

**Preparation:** The work of setting up and operating the bookshelf program requires people hours. Who will paint the shelf and collection crates? Who will contact organizations for placing crates and shelves?

**Book Donations:** Who will collect donated books, clean and label them, and take them to the bookshelves? You may want to do an initial, big community-wide book drive to kick off the program. Think about all your possible partners (scout groups, schools, congregations, businesses, etc.) who can mobilize families to donate outgrown books. Use this book drive to publicize your new program.

**Book Storage:** Where will donated books be processed and stored?

**“Branding”:** What name, color, and logo do you want to start using? Your shelf could be red or another distinctive color. Consistent use of your “look” will start to create awareness of your program in your community.

**Publicity:** Who will write up newspaper and radio announcements to let the community know about the program and to encourage them to donate books? Who will design and print posters and flyers to be distributed in the community for ongoing publicity or to announce a special Bookshelf event?

**Costs of program:** Start up costs include the shelf, crates, paint, signs, labels and stickers. Once the initial investment has been made, the ongoing costs of more labels and stickers, cleaning supplies, thank you cards, etc. are fairly modest. Additional shelves can be added as funding is available.

**Supplies:** Here are is a list of supplies you may need initially for your Bookshelf program if you start with one shelf. Contact the suppliers that carry these items to get an idea of prices.

- **Large front-facing bookshelf:** Childcraft brand wooden shelves are ideal (See [www.childcraft.com](http://www.childcraft.com), search for front-facing bookshelf) *Note: Bookshelves that allow books to be displayed with their covers facing out (front-facing) are preferable over shelves where just the book spine is facing out. When children can see the cover of a book, they are more likely to be interested in taking a closer look at it.*
- **2-4 plastic crates:** nice if they can fit on the bottom shelf of the bookshelf or nearby
- **Paint supplies:** quart of paint, primer, and brushes (or ask a local paint company to donate supplies or spray paint the shelf for free)
- **Sign:** on cardstock, laminated paper, or framed depending on your budget
- **Labels,** quantity: 10,000 or fewer to start, on a roll or sheets
- **Miscellaneous** cleaning supplies, thank you cards, cover-up stickers, etc.

**\$500-\$1,000 TOTAL**

**Sponsorship:** Approach a business in your community that you think will be supportive of this literacy initiative. Often businesses like to help get a program started. Be sure to acknowledge a sponsor in any publicity and with letters of thanks.

## Steps for Setting up a Bookshelf Site

- **Secure funding:** prepare a budget and seek funding to buy the shelf and supplies needed
- **Collect books:** through a book drive or collection crates in the community
- **Prepare books:** sort, clean, and label donated books
- **Prepare bookshelf:** purchase, paint, and create signs
- **Secure shelf host site:** choose site and ask if they would like to host, establish expectations
- **Secure shelf tender:** recruit a volunteer, establish expectations
- **Stock shelf with books:** tender can help do this
- **“Open” bookshelf:** use this opportunity to publicize shelf and program, invite families / community to use shelf

# Collection

## Collection Crates:

Sturdy plastic crates in the color of your choice are ideal for collecting books. Use the same color for your crates as you have chosen for your shelf color.

## Collection Sites:

Collection crates with an accompanying laminated sign should be placed in areas of high foot traffic where families frequent. For permanent signs it is important to laminate or frame signs for durability. Such sites might include children's stores, grocery stores, YMCA or community center, bookstores, schools or childcare centers. The owner or manager of a potential collection site should be contacted directly and invited to participate in the project. Once you have established a bookshelf site, a crate can be placed nearby or under the shelf as a place for ongoing donations.

## Book Drives:

Also enlist community groups, congregations, schools, and businesses to collect gently used children's books. Even banks can collect books in their lobbies or small fliers can be given out at the drive through windows to remind patrons to bring books to the bank to donate.

Supply the group doing the book drive with crates that are labeled with information about the drive:

sample  
book drive  
sign

Reading Pays Dividends!

Help Share the Wealth!

CFCU Community Credit Union

**BOOK DRIVE**

**DONATE**  
gently used  
children's books  
for the  
**Bright Red Bookshelf Program**

July 1  
through  
July 31

Family Reading Partnership  
[www.familyreading.org](http://www.familyreading.org)



*Children at a child care center with the crates of books they collected from their families and donated to the Bright Red Bookshelf program*

### **Thank You and Donation Receipts:**

Most donations will be dropped off into crates anonymously, however, there are occasions when you will know a donor's name and can send a thank you. Some individuals may want a receipt noting how many books they donated for tax purposes. The individual is responsible for placing a value on the books.

## Family Reading Partnership

Donor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*quantity*

*type of book*





FRP Staff signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Because of IRS regulations, the value of your donation cannot be determined by the Family Reading Partnership. The estimate is your responsibility.

*Thank you for your donation!*

No goods or services were given by Family Reading Partnership to donor for their contribution.

# Evaluating Sites for a Bookshelf

*Here are some things to consider when deciding where to locate a bookshelf in your community:*

- Do many families (especially resource-challenged families) with young children frequent this location?
- How many books do you anticipate being taken by families from this site? Will you be able to keep the shelf stocked?
- How much “human touch” would be there, i.e. someone on site to encourage families to choose books from the shelf
- How would the bookshelf be integrated into the work of the host agency or business?
- Would books be available in the waiting room of the agency or sitting area of the business?
- Would the agency/business give support to families to encourage family reading?
- Is there a dedicated contact on site or outside volunteer who will manage the shelf, keep it looking neat, and call when more books are needed?
- Would the host organization be able to contribute any money toward the cost of the shelf? (Ideal but not mandatory, depending on other funding sources.)
- In setting up a bookshelf in a location, be sure to make it clear who owns the shelf. You may need to switch the shelf to a new place in the future.

## Establishing Host and Tender Expectations

It is best to have a written agreement with your volunteers as a way to establish expectations. A volunteer “Tender” for the site can keep the shelf clean and stocked. The “Host” of the shelf also needs to know expectations for encouraging families to use the shelf and to contact the Tender if the shelf needs more books.

*Sample Tender and Host agreements are on the following pages.*

## Tracking Incoming and Outgoing Books

It is useful to keep a record to how many books are donated and how many books are taken home by families for future reports or as information to use to support grants or other funding sources.

*Collection and Distribution Log samples are on the next pages.*

## Criteria for Book Selection

It is critical to the Bright Red Bookshelf program that good quality children’s books be on the shelves. We want families, especially those who may have had little contact with books, to choose from an attractive, inviting selection of the best books we are able to provide.

*See guidelines for sorting and cleaning books in following section, “Preparation of books.”*







# Bright Red Bookshelf™

"No children's book should ever be lonely!"



## Thank you for being a *Bright Red Bookshelf Tender*

- Your bookshelf location is \_\_\_\_\_, at address:  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Your contact person at this location is \_\_\_\_\_  
at phone # \_\_\_\_\_.

- Visit your shelf location and introduce yourself to the contact person there. Take letter that lists you as tender to the host.
- Check your shelf and collection crate on a regular basis (at least once a week) to stock shelf and tidy it up and pick up any book donations. (You may want to leave a few books behind to "seed" donations.)
- Bring donated books in a box or bag (leave crate at site) to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ at phone # \_\_\_\_\_. Donated books will be sorted and made ready to go out on a Bright Red Bookshelf.
- Respond to "our crate is full" calls from host as soon as possible.
- Keep track of donations on provided log sheet.
- **Site upkeep instructions:**  
Take along a dust rag for occasional dusting/cleaning.  
Remove magazines and other non-book materials that may end up on shelf.  
Stock shelf with books and keep some books stored in back of shelf.  
Straighten books. If you see a book that has been on the shelf for many weeks and hasn't been taken by a family, remove it and bring back to office.  
Check bookshelf, donation crate, and sign for wear and tear and notify the Family Reading Partnership office if repairs are needed.



# Bright Red Bookshelf™

"No children's book should ever be lonely!"



## ***Dear Bright Red Bookshelf Host,***

Thank you for hosting a Bright Red Bookshelf. It is important to place the shelf and the accompanying collection crate and sign in a visible location. Community members will be dropping off gently used children's books in your collection crate and families will be taking books home to read together and keep.

Please encourage customers or patrons to donate children's books in good condition.

Please encourage families to take one or two books per child per visit.

If your bookshelf needs books, your collection crate is full, or if you have questions, call me at phone #\_\_\_\_\_. I will respond to your call as soon as possible. I will also be stocking your shelf on a regular basis.

If you can't reach me or have questions about the Bright Red Bookshelf, please contact Family Reading Partnership at: \_\_\_\_\_. The name of your business/organization will be listed on bookmarks and in publicity as a Bright Red Bookshelf shelf and collection location.

## ***Your Bright Red Bookshelf Tender,***



# Guidelines for Preparing Donated Books *for the*

## Bright Red Bookshelf™



### Sorting:

**Condition:** When sorting books for the Bright Red Bookshelf, keep in mind we are trying to entice children to love books, to cherish them, and to want to learn to read them. Giving them books that are dirty, torn, of poor quality or otherwise unattractive does not accomplish that objective. Such books, if they are still usable, should be set aside and donated to a library book sale. If there are missing pages, have badly torn covers, smell musty, or are otherwise unsightly, they should be tossed in the recycle bin.

**Content:** We look for books with lovely pictures, engaging text, good print, and quality paper and binding. Board book up through early chapter books are appropriate for children who visit the shelf. Please do not place books with themes of romance or with violence, or ones that clearly appeal to older youth or adults. Because FRP is non-sectarian, religious books should also be donated elsewhere.

### Cleaning and Mending:

It's important that books which go onto our shelves look bright, shiny, and ready to pick up and love. Yet, many donated books need work. Please clean all books whether they appear to need it or not. A light spray with Windex on a soft cloth (do *not* spray book directly) will remove most dirt from book covers.

Glue from price tags can be a problem, but a small dose of "GooGone" on a cloth is usually adequate to remove it. Repair torn pages with magic tape. An eraser and elbow grease can get rid of some scribbles. The exacto knife is a good tool to spruce up books. Sometimes just the front page that has no story content is ripped and can be neatly sliced out.

Books donated by schools or libraries often have a card pocket pasted in and stamped ID marks on pages throughout the book. ID marks can just be covered over with black felt pen. Remove the page with the pocket on it with an exacto knife. If the pocket has been glued to the book cover, however, you may have difficulty removing it. You will have to decide whether the effort is worth it.

If the book is too badly compromised to clean by these methods, send it to a book sale or recycle.

### Stickers and Labels:

It is important to check **INSIDE** all books before assuming that they are ready to go. Many books are in excellent condition, clean easily, and seem ready to set on the shelf, but inside you discover an inscription (eg. "To Johnny from Grandma on his 6th birthday") Names written in books is very common. Because we want to minimize the impression that these are used books, we make sticker sheets with an adhesive back that can be cut to size to cover these inscriptions, prior labels or other marks. (*See sample stickers following.*)

**Small Label:** Finally, books that are to be placed on Bright Red Bookshelves are affixed with a small label with Family Reading Partnership information. The label is wrapped around the lower spine of the book and can thus be easily identified as part of the Bright Red Bookshelf collection, our community library of books to keep or return.



Family Reading  
Partnership  
www.familyreading.org

# Brief Check List for Sorting and Cleaning Donated Books *for the*

## Bright Red Bookshelf™



- **Sort:** Select books for children—donate others elsewhere
- **Check condition:** Is book in decent shape?  
Binding shot? Severely ripped pages? Too marked up? Smells musty?  
If so, recycle.
- **Clean:**  
Spray cloth with Windex then wipe covers on all books.  
Use GooGone on cloth for sticky spots.  
Erase pencil and crayon marks, if possible.  
For library donations, remove card pocket and blacken over ID stamps.
- **Stickers:**  
Cover up inscriptions, marks or labels inside books with printed white adhesive sheet cut to right size.
- **Repair:**  
Pages not too badly torn can be repaired with magic tape, If the book is a good quality one, yet the binding is broken, you can use wide clear tape to repair it along the inside spine.
- **Label:**  
Wrap label around the bottom of the book spine; press firmly.

### Cleaning supplies

Windex & cloth  
GooGone  
Magic tape  
Wide clear tape  
Eraser  
Black sharpie marker  
Exacto Knife  
Cover-up stickers  
Scissors  
Labels for spine

**Reminder:** Please keep your Bright Red Bookshelf *bright*,  
by dusting and cleaning it periodically.



Family Reading Partnership • 54 Gunderman Rd. Ithaca, NY 14850 • 607.277.8602  
www.familyreading.org

Bright Red Bookshelf™

# Bright Red Bookshelf™



This is the life!



These images can be copied onto full sheet label stock, then cut apart to make stickers for covering up marks and inscriptions in donated books.

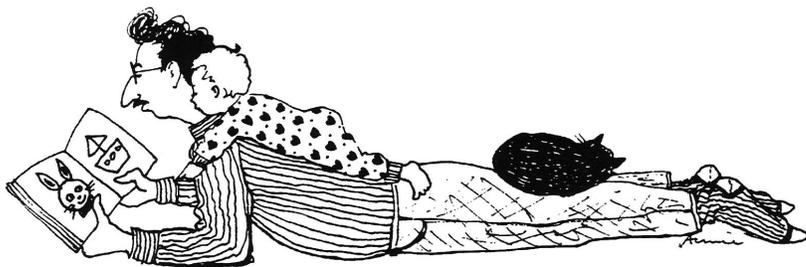


Books Open the World



Bright Red Bookshelf™

Bright Red Bookshelf™



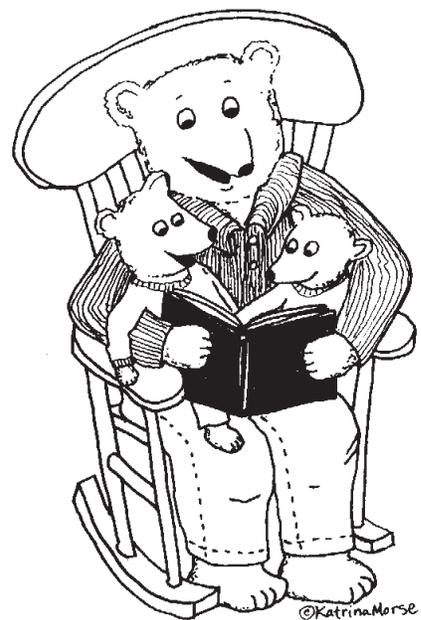
*Reading is food for the mind!*



Make Friends with Books



Books are Friends



Books are Toys for Learning

# Celebrate the Opening of Your New Bookshelf!

Once you have collected a few hundred books and secured a location for your shelf, you can open the shelf for families to take books! We like to dedicate each new shelf by gathering together key individuals, to appreciate them with thanks and refreshments. This is also a great opportunity to publicize your program and create awareness in your community so the shelf will be used and books will be regularly donated.

Here are some ideas for the celebration:

- Invite people who were involved with shelf planning, local government or agency officials, and families who may use the shelf.
- Put up invitation posters or hand out fliers inviting people to the shelf opening.
- Have an unveiling of the shelf. Fill the shelf with books then cover with a cloth. Make an announcement to those who are gathered and take off the cloth to reveal the new shelf! This could also be a ribbon cutting instead of an unveiling.
- When making an announcement, thank all the donors and volunteers who have helped.
- Create a festive atmosphere with decorations and light refreshments.
- If children are going to be attending, provide special activities such as making little books to take home, arts and crafts, and read-aloud by an adult.



*Program director and volunteer reader at the Bright Red Bookshelf opening at a housing facility.*



*Executive director at a human service agency and his son at their new shelf.*

sample  
invitation  
poster

# Grand Opening of The Overlook at West Hill

# Bright Red Bookshelf™

**Monday, Sept. 21th**

**3pm at The Clubhouse**

Bring your grown-up!

- Ribbon cutting
- Refreshments
- Bookmaking
- Listen to books read aloud!

**FREE  
BOOK**  
for every  
child!



Family Reading  
Partnership  
[www.familyreading.org](http://www.familyreading.org)



*Come see your NEW neighborhood bookshelf!*

The media is always invited and encouraged to come to the opening. *It's ideal if you can get a someone from the media to take a photo of the event--or take a photo yourself and send to the media if they can't attend.*

**Media Release - sample**

For: Immediate Release

From: (Contact person, name of your organization, phone number)

When: (Date of bookshelf inauguration)

**Welcome to the Bright Red Bookshelf!**

The Grand Opening of the Bright Red Bookshelf in (your area/town) will take place on (opening date) at (location). (Well-known person) of (person's affiliation) will cut the ribbon on this bright red shelf of beautiful books that are available free for families! Community members are welcome to attend, and children are invited to take a beautiful, gently used book from the shelf home to keep.

The Bright Red Bookshelf is a project of (your organization). It is designed to give all children in our area access to books by recirculating gently used children's books back into the community free for families to keep.

Community members can support this effort by contributing gently used children's books for infants, toddlers and beginning readers at collection sites at (book crate locations).

Please join us for this exciting event! For more information, call (your contact person and phone number).



**Public Service Announcement - sample**

*Radio stations will often assist not-for-profit organizations by creating and airing Public Service Announcements that benefit the community at no cost. Most often they are 30 seconds in length, but can be 60 seconds.*

There should never be a children's book in (your town/area) that is lonely!

This is (your name) from the (your organization). We are working with (your partners) to collect gently used children's books and recirculate them in our community for families to keep.

We now have (number) Bright Red Bookshelf location(s) across (your area), and we need your help to keep them stocked.

So please, check on your shelves, look in your closet, find the books in good condition that your children have outgrown, and donate them for another parent and child to enjoy together.

Gently used children's books can be dropped in bright red crates at (location of crates).

For more information, please call (your contact person and phone number).

Together we can give every child in our community access to a library of books in their own home.

Thanks for your contribution. Every book counts!

# Free Books for Families!

Take a book • Leave a book • Read a book!

## Bright Red Bookshelf™



We enlarge signs like this one and place them in bright red metal picture frames with a colorful border.

One book per child. Keep or bring back.



## Family Reading Partnership

The Bright Red Bookshelf is one of many programs of the Family Reading Partnership. For more information, please call 607-277-8602, or visit us at [www.familyreading.org](http://www.familyreading.org).

These small round signs can be cut out and laminated, then stapled or taped to a shelf if desired.



Make friends  
with books!



**One book**  
per child, please.

**Thank you!**

**Thank you** for setting up your own bookshelf program in your community! Every child needs books at home to love and cherish and read again and again!