

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT CHILDREN'S NATIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
WASHINGTON, DC
DECEMBER 15, 1997

- Thank you so much for honoring me with this award. I'm delighted to once again have the chance to visit Children's National Medical Center.
- Children's hospitals have always played a special role in our country -- and they have always held a special place in my heart. When Bill and I were still in Arkansas, I served on the board of Arkansas Children's Hospital. I learned then what all of you know: For children's hospitals to thrive, it takes individuals who, day in and day out, dedicate their hearts and minds to getting the job done. Individuals who, despite the obstacles, refuse to ever give up. That's what the Children's National Medical Center has done for 127 years. And for that, all of us -- inside and outside of government, inside and outside of Washington -- owe you our thanks and our admiration.
- I want to especially thank those of you who are playing a leadership role in making this hospital a part of our Prescription For Reading Partnership, which I announced earlier this year. It is bringing together pediatricians, hospitals, libraries, and others around the country -- just as you will be doing with your Reach Out and Read Program -- to encourage and enable more parents to read to their children.
- I'd like to acknowledge the two co-chairs of this extraordinary effort at Children's, Dr. Sandra Cuzzi [koo -- zee] and Brenda Shepard Vernon, each of whom has been instrumental in bringing the Reach Out and Read program to life. Thanks to the dedication of these two women, along with the D.C. Public Library and so many other people here at Children's, new parents will be sent home with one of the most powerful medicines of all: A Prescription to Read to their newborn children. I'm pleased to hear that nurses and volunteers will be reading to children while they are in waiting rooms, making a book a part of every pediatric visit, and then giving the child the chance to take that book home.
- When it comes to improving the fate of children in America, we all have a lot to be thankful for this holiday season. Childhood immunization rates are at an all time high. Infant mortality rates are at historic lows. And the balanced budget agreement the President signed this past August includes an unprecedented \$24 billion to help provide health insurance to millions of children who don't know have it. That's the largest investment in children's health care in more than 30 years. With this new initiative, we now have the opportunity -- and the ability -- to take a major step forward in ensuring that all children can live up to their God-given promise. I know all of you will work hard to meet this challenge -- just as you have always done whenever the health of our children has hung in the balance.

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Reach Out and Read **A Pediatric Program to Support Early Literacy Development**

Overview: The *Reach Out and Read* program began at Boston City Hospital in 1989 as a way to encourage literacy development in young children living in economically disadvantaged communities. Children's National Medical Center will be implementing the program in January of 1998. Many of the families who receive their primary health care at our site are struggling to raise their children in the face of severe medical and social risk. Research has shown that children from socially disadvantaged homes are at risk for reading failure, which contributes to school failure and may ultimately keep those children in the grip of poverty. As part of providing complete medical care to inner city children, the health care providers at Children's Hospital are committed to offering families medical and developmental resources to help them break the deadening cycle of poverty and educational underachievement. The *Reach Out and Read* program improves literacy among these at-risk children by providing their parents with the tools and support they need to help the children to literacy and school success.

The problem: A 1993 Department of Education study estimated that over 40 million Americans are functionally illiterate. In adults, illiteracy correlates with welfare dependency and poor earning potential; in children, it is associated with school failure, juvenile delinquency, and teenage pregnancy. According to the National Commission on Reading's 1985 report, reading aloud by parents is the single most crucial factor in children's later reading success. Many parents do not realize how important they can be in helping their children; others know that reading aloud is important, but are not sure how to proceed, especially with young children.

A solution: The *Reach Out and Read* Program gives parents of at-risk children the information, encouragement, and material they need to make books part of their children's lives. The program integrates parent education about literacy development into regular pediatric care for children from birth to five years of age. At Children's Hospital, our primary health care site serves more than 500 children per week with a very large proportion coming from low income families. Statistically, these children are at a higher-than-average risk of reading failure. We are well positioned to address literacy development, and to do it successfully because of our unique relationship with the children and families we serve. In most cases, the relationship begins during the time in a child's life when the foundations of literacy are laid, long before the child is ready for school or Head Start programs.

The program: The *Reach Out and Read* program has three components: reading aloud to children in the hospital waiting room, incorporating an age-appropriate book into the pediatric health care visit, and finally, inviting the child to take that book home. Through these activities, we show children and parents that books and book activities "feel good". Modeling reading behavior for parents stresses the core activities in reading aloud: being together, talking with the child, and becoming comfortable with books.

Volunteer readers are trained by the hospital and taught about the developmental milestones of early literacy. These volunteers come to the outpatient waiting room, set out a display rack of children's books, and engage young patients and their siblings in reading activities. The volunteers don't simply read aloud; they interact with the children, encouraging them to identify pictures, add their own experiences, and create new stories around the one being read. They encourage older children to read to younger ones, and answer the questions of other family members.

The doctors and nurses make sure that each patient from birth to five years of age receives a developmentally appropriate book at every well child visit, and that the parent receives information about the importance of reading activities. Because the medical staff know their patients well, they are able to select books tailored to each child's need. The health care provider presents the book to the young patient and caretaker, looks through it with them, and comments on how the child's interaction with the book relates to the development of motor skills, language socialization, and autonomy. The professional may also use the book as a tool in the assessment of the child. Finally, the staff will inscribe the book with the child's name and a short message.

Program budget: The total cost of the Children's Hospital *Reach Out & Read* program is \$20,000 per year, primarily for book purchases and staff support. The books we give to children are carefully selected, with guidance from physicians, educators, and reading specialists, to meet our patients' developmental needs. For this reason, we are seeking donations in philanthropic support to allow us to purchase selections from the program's approved booklist.

Please contact us with any questions regarding the *Reach Out and Read* program.

Sandra Cuzzi, M.D. (301) 754-7242

Brenda Shepherd-Vernon, M.S.W. (202) 884-5214

Key players in the Reach Out and Read program:

Co-directors: Sandra Cuzzi, M.D.

Brenda Shepherd-Vernon, M.S.W.

As you probably already know, each Reach Out and Read program has its own unique style to reach the group of children in its community. We have kept the program's focus on the preschool period but have extended the start to the first newborn visit. More and more, we are finding that children have the capacity to learn at younger ages. We no longer recommend starting to read to children at the age when the child may learn to read himself. Rather, early exposure provides stimulation for brain development and growth. By making parents feel comfortable with books at the very start of their child's life, we hope to encourage the reading process early.

DC Public Library: Maria Salvadore

Pam Stovall

They have volunteered their time and have been instrumental as educators in both childrens' book selections and volunteer training for the Children's Hospital Reach Out and Read program. Pam already has a Reach Out and Read program in place which focuses on licensed home child care providers in the Washington DC area. They are also both involved in a family literacy project with incarcerated individuals and teach about child development and behavior through books and literacy building activities.

Volunteers:

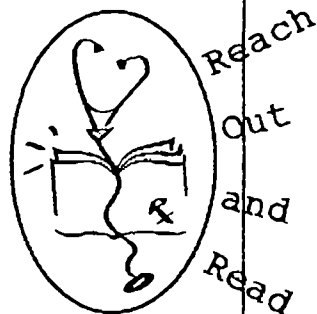
The most important group in the effort to bring books into the lives of children are the volunteers. They model reading behavior and allow parents to feel comfortable sharing a book with their children. Hopefully by providing a role model and encouraging the parents' literacy efforts we can show children and parents that books and book activities "feel good".

First Book Distributors:

First Book has provided books through publishers at a significantly discounted rate, allowing us to purchase more books for the many children in our community. By centralizing this process, they have both facilitated the logistics and reduced the costs.

Reach Out and Read
Children's National Medical Center
Book Selection

<u>Age</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Publisher</u>
Two weeks	Tickle, Tickle All Fall Down	Helen Oxenbury	Simon and Schuster
Two months	Max's First Word	Rosemary Wells	Dial
Four months	What color? Que color?	Alan Benjamin	Simon and Schuster
Six months	Mommy and Me	Neil Ricklen	Simon and Schuster
Nine months	Baby's Zoo	Neil Ricklen	Simon and Schuster
Twelve months	Tomie's Little Mother Goose Go Dog Go	Tomie de Paola PD Eastman	Putnam Random House
Fifteen months	Good Morning Baby The Very Hungry Caterpillar	Cheryl Willis Hudson Eric Carle	Scholastic Scholastic
Eighteen months	Chicka Chicka abc Let's Go Home Little Bear	Bill Martin Jr. Martin Waddell	Simon and Schuster Candlewick Press
Two years	The Little Red Hen Freight Train	Paul Galdone Donald Crews	Houghton Mifflin Scholastic
Three years	The Snowy Day Jamaica Tag Along Noisy Nora	Ezra Keats Juanita Hewill Rosemary Wells	Scholastic Scholastic Scholastic
Four years	So Much Corduroy Loving Everybody Cooks Rice	Trish Cooke Don Freeman Ann Morris Nora Dooley	Candlewick Press Scholastic Scholastic Scholastic
Five years	Bread, Bread, Bread Abiyoyo Leo the Late Bloomer Amazing Grace	Ann Morris Pete Seeger's Storysong Robert Kraus Mary Hoffman	Scholastic Scholastic Scholastic Scholastic



REACH OUT AND READ (ROR) PROGRESS (Since Prescription for Reading 4/97)

Barry Zuckerman, M.D.
Professor and Chairman of
Pediatrics
Boston Medical Center
Founding Director
Reach Out and Read

ROR National Staff

Perri Klass, M.D.
Medical Director

Christine Angell

Nancy Berman

Pat Cowan, R.N.

Elaine Grossman, M.Ed.

Abby Jewkes, Ed.M.

Matthew Veno

Kate Williams

- 170 Reach Out and Read sites in 39 states serving over 500,000 children
- 2 million books have been distributed to 1 million children at hospitals, health centers, and pediatric offices throughout the United States
- 4,000 pediatricians and nurse practitioners have been trained in early literacy development
- ROR National Center has provided over \$400,000 in grants to beginning ROR programs since 4/97
- Scholastic has donated 125,000 books
- First Book has donated 100,000 books and devised a discounted book ordering system for all ROR sites, involving 13 publishers
- American Booksellers Association distributed 200,000 free copies of Read To Your Bunny to families via independent bookstores and donated remaining books from their convention in May
- Dreyfus awarded funding to a local hospital, which served as a matching grant
- Ronald McDonald House Charities awarded funding for books to ROR and First Book
- Mellon Trust awarded funding for expansion at Boston health centers
- Hasbro Foundation awarded funding for expansion in Alabama
- Rhode Island Foundation awarded funding for expansion in Rhode Island
- Harris Foundation awarded funding for Chicago city-wide expansion
- Casey Foundation awarded funding for Baltimore city-wide expansion
- ROR programs in NYC have formed the first ROR City-Wide Coalition
- Training session by ROR and plenary session by Barry Zuckerman, MD at the American Academy of Pediatrics Annual Meeting in November
- Partnership with National Association of Community Health Centers to bring ROR to its 900 health centers
- National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions sent information on ROR to all its members
- ROR is working with Reading Is Fundamental on a number of collaborative projects in order to reach more children