



THE READING IS FUN NEWSLETTER

March
2025

Introducing... The Team Behind Scrabble-Rama!

On Saturday, April 5, 2025, RIF's 5th Annual Scrabble-Rama fundraiser will be held at Schenectady High School. It is organized by a team that includes members of RIF's own Leadership Committee, as well as three unsung heroes. *Who are these great people? How did it come about? How do you play?* Inquiring minds want to know... and here are your answers!

In 2018, a Scrabble-Rama fundraiser was proposed by **Nancy Sagendorf**, a friend and former colleague of Sally Magid. Nancy taught science in Schenectady City schools for 33 years and is a member of the Schenectady City School District Educational Foundation. (She also works at Howe's Cavern!) Nancy had attended a Scrabble-based fundraising event near her hometown of Richmondville, New York, and she suggested to Al and Sally Magid that something similar might work for RIF.

Brenda Seckerson joined the initiative as she has been friends with Nancy since 1980, their first year of teaching at Mont Pleasant High School. Brenda is from Ohio, but her paternal family roots are in New York, so she eventually made her way back. In addition to teaching, she has a drama and theater background. She loves movies and traveling. Brenda serves as emcee of the event. "After the first year, it went over well. Each year we gradually gain more participants. It evolves and everyone has fun."

Susan Burton has been on the Scrabble-Rama committee for the last three years. Susan works with Jan Gallas on the event's raffle planning and execution. At the event, Scrabble-Rama participants can buy raffle tickets and choose among a dozen or so items to try to win. They can also take part in the 50/50 raffle. Susan has been a Reading Partner since 2016. (For more on Susan, please see this month's "Reading Partners Spotlight").

How do you play Scrabble-Rama? It is a collaborative twist on Scrabble. Players form teams (of 1-4) and work together vs other teams. The objective is for a team to use their tiles to create as many and as long words (to score as high as possible) in a set timeframe and using different themes and rules for each round.

The event begins with a brief warm-up game to get the gist of how it works. Then, three 25-minute games are held, each with special themes. Teams can "cheat for a good cause" by buying letters or peeks at the dictionary. Team monitors are available for assistance with play and scoring. "It's a friendly competition," said Nancy. "Once you play it, you're going to love it!"

Winners get medals and the glory of being the Scrabble-Rama champion. For three years, "**Team Chanarama**" with **Sarah & Ben Chan** have taken first place. Can a challenger topple their reign? Well, you can't win if you don't play. Hope to see you at Scrabble-Rama!



During SIRIF week, RIF distributes a set of gifts to every Schenectady first grader.



It's a Scrabble-Rama!

A Scrabble Competition to Benefit
The Reading Is Fun (RIF) Program

- ◆ Teams of 2–4 people (ages 18 & up) compete
- ◆ Prizes awarded to top 3 teams
- ◆ Continental Breakfast & Raffle
- ◆ \$20 per person entry fee to support RIF's programs
- ◆ Registration opens in February

Saturday, April 5
9:00 am—Noon
Schenectady High School
Cafeteria

For Event Information, Registration, and Entry Fee:
<https://www.readingisfun.org/> - Call 518-388-8410



On March 10, 2025, the RSAC showed Reading Partners how to use games to assist in developing literacy skills with students.



Spring Into Reading Is Fun is Springing into Action!

While it is only March, plans are well underway for our 4th Annual Spring Into Reading Is Fun (SIRIF) week, beginning May 12th, 2025. During the week, RIF gives every Schenectady first grader five books, a t-shirt and blue cinch bag. In addition, our Reading Partners visit each first grade classroom, read a book to the class, and gift it to the teacher for the classroom. The program is a great way to broaden RIF's impact and to put more books in young readers' hands. RIF is grateful for the generous support of the **Wright Foundation** to make SIRIF possible.

RIF's events planner Jan Gallas needs volunteers. Specifically, she needs help folding t-shirts and put together the bags for the students. Please keep watch for emails asking for help, or reach out to Jan directly at jgigfl@aol.com.

Volunteer Coordinator Valerie Rivera will be contacting Reading Partners soon to determine who is interested in participating in SIRIF week reading.

Please Support Us!

The Reading Is Fun Program, Inc. is grateful for tax-deductible monetary donations supporting our organization. A gift to RIF to honor someone or in memory of someone or to commemorate someone or something is a special way to show you care. **To contribute, please write your check to "The Reading Is Fun Program, Inc.", & mail it to The Reading Is Fun Program, PO Box 9437, Schenectady, NY 12309. Thank you for your consideration.**

Reading Partners Spotlight: Scrabble-Rama Special



Ooh lala! Sarah in Paris

Sarah Chan

Where & with what age group do you work? Zoller Elementary with third graders.

Why did you get involved with RIF? This is my first year volunteering with RIF, though **I've been a fixture at Scrabble-Rama since its inception.** I saw the ad in the paper for the first one and thought it would be fun for me and my word-game-loving husband. It way exceeded expectations! We started to love RIF as an organization and all the great people who run it. This year I decided to make room in my life to volunteer.

How do you make reading fun? Third grade is a great age for discovering fun new things to read about. All three students I work with like reading nonfiction books that tell them about something new. One of the children discovered Vikings last week, and he thought they were so cool!

What else do you enjoy? I've got four school-aged kids and they keep me pretty busy when they're not in school! We are all big readers, though my youngest son is just starting to really catch on to how fun it can be. I'm also taking an online class right now through catherineproject.org to study the Iliad and the Odyssey, which is both fun and challenging.

Suggestions or questions on RIF newsletter? Please contact Sabrina Ricci sabrinaevericci@gmail.com

Susan Burton

Where and with what age group do you work? With third graders at Martin Luther King Jr. in teacher Nicole Izzo's class.

Why did you get involved with RIF? In 2016, I spoke with a RIF volunteer hosting a table at the Farmfest at Riverview Orchards. RIF appealed to me as I am interested in helping children. ***I am on the Scrabble-Rama Committee.***

How do you make reading fun? By third grade, children "see world through their own eyes, learn self-reliance and need affirmation that they have opinions that are valid." I keep their interest by relating what we read to today. For example, we are reading Who are Serena and Venus Williams?, and I showed my student a short video of Serena serving at 120 mph. She was amazed, and it piqued her interest in reading the book.

What else keeps you busy? I've been volunteering in Clifton Park for many years with the League of Women Voters and Friends of Clifton Park Open Space. I worked in sales at AT&T for 42 years but have been retired for the last 12 years. I have 2 grown sons and twin grandsons who also keep me on my toes!



Susan with her adorable grandsons