

THE READING IS FUN PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2025

Reading Skills Committee Helps Reading Partners Prepare to Work With New Students

On Monday, October 20th, the Reading Skills
Advisory Committee held its first Reading
Partner support meeting of the school year at
Schenectady Faith United Methodist Church.
Over 30 Reading Partners attended to learn how
to get off to a good start with their students.

After introductions by Mary Batzinger, Anita Niezgoda began the meeting by discussing how to set expectations and routines for your students. She also suggested assembling a "preparedness kit" with items such as tissues, hand wipes, crayons, etc. to have on hand when meeting with your student. Marty Delmonico talked about getting to know your student using interest inventories, drawing, and a variety of other handouts (Copies available in RIF library.) Linda Francois and Vicki Bremer discussed how to select books that take into account a child's cultural and socioeconomic status. Linda suggested selecting some relatable books serving as a mirror to the child's life, while selecting others as a window to expand their vision of the world. Using all of this new knowledge, participants practiced choosing books based on descriptions of fictional students, led by Paula Metzner. We hope everyone had fun and learned something along the way!

We look forward to the next support meeting for Reading Partners, to be held on November 17th at 3:00-4:30 pm. *by Deb Carey*







RIF Reading Partners taking part in October's Reading Skills meeting (photos above & below)







LITERACY MATCH SUPPORTERS

Literacy Visionaries

Anonymous
Anonymous
Anonymous
Mary Batzinger
BBL Construction Services LLC
Marilyn J. Chase Family Trust
David Cheesman In Memory of
Halo Branton

First Reformed Church of Scotia Hershey Family Foundation Alvin & Sally Magid

Literacy Leaders

Jeanette Abbate
Michele Ricci-Bell
Fredrick Bremer-Bremer Forensic
Consultants PLLC

Vicki Bremer

Deb Carey

Curtis Lumber

Christine DeLuke

Nicki Foley

Jan Gallas

Daniel Gregory

Elizabeth Gregory

Kevin and Suzin Healy

Rosaline Horowitz

Linda Knipper

Meg Levine

Larry Lewis

Lord's Acre Fair Committee of the Burnt

Hills Methodist Church

Sandra McIntyre

Sheila McMenamin

Jeffrey Murtagh

Niskayuna Reformed Church

Rebecca ODonnell

Larry Pierce

Nancy Pierce

Kristen & Sean Quinn

RIF's Literacy Match Challenge Update

As of November 7, 2025, RIF has raised over 60% of our \$30,000 goal! **Thank you very much** to all who have donated to the Literacy Match Challenge to support the Spring into Reading is Fun project for this school year and the next two! See list of donors on the left & below. A reminder:

- Every donation of any amount is appreciated.
- The Wright Family Foundation matches dollar for dollar, so \$25=\$50.
- All donations are tax-deductible
- Donations can be made on the RIF website: <u>www.readingisfun.org</u> or mail a check to **Reading Is Fun**, **P.O. Box 9437**, **Schenectady**, **NY 12309**.
- Please help reach our \$30,000 goal! Thank you!

<u>Literacy Leaders, cont'd</u>

Frances Ricci
Sabrina Ricci
Valerie Rivera
Mary Lou Russo
Ricki D Shapiro
Schenectada Chapter NSDAR
Schenectady Federation of Teachers
Mary Suminski
Carla Suna
Stephanie Warlik

Literacy Impact Makers

Anonymous
Susan Burton
Danielle Chapola
Constance Clarke
Bruce Connolly
Colleen Doyle
Kathleen Greene
Lucinda Huggins
Maureen Wiedl

Volunteer Placement Update

Volunteer Coordinator Valerie Rivera reports that as of Oct 31, 2025, 88 Reading Partners are working with 178 students.

Welcome to our new Reading Partners!
Laurie Bacheldor (Paige), Mary Bonner
(Woodlawn), Lucinda Huggins (MLK),
Teresa Malizia (Paige), Ed Martenis
(Pleasant Valley), Kathie Paul
(Woodlawn), & Mary Vawter (Zoller).

Do you love volunteering with RIF? Do you have family or friends who would like to join you? Please ask them to email Valerie Rivera at rifvolunteerplacements@gmail.com.

Van Corlear: Reading Partner Michele Koop volunteered to distribute books at Van Corlear's Trunk or Treat on Oct 30th. Interest was great, and Michele distributed about 150 books. Enjoy photos of the fun below!









Paige: Pat Tersigni and Ricki Shapiro volunteered for the Paige Trunk or Treat on Oct 30. They had four plastic bins and one larger crate filled with books and gave out every last one- about 150 books! The event was held in the gymnasium because of the rain and was abuzz for two hours with gaily-costumed children (and their parents!) dancing, gathering buckets of candy, and thoroughly enjoying being able to choose a free book from among the many made available by Reading is Fun.



Above: Pat Tersigni (left) & Ricki Shapiro (right) at the Paige Elementary School Trunk or Treat in October 2025. Pat volunteers with Mary Newcomb's first grade class, & Ricki volunteers with Scott Pettingill's second grade class.



Above: Student Resource Officers Jon Govel (left) and Ross Flood (right) hold up a book given to the department from Reading is Fun at the Paige Trunk or Treat in October 2025.



Reading Partner Spotlight



Where and with what age group do you work? I work at Van Corlear Elementary School with third graders (8 year olds).

Why did you join RIF?

I got involved with reading is fun because I am retired and have time. I don't have children and I would like to help. This is my 4th year working with RIF!

How do you make reading fun?

I make reading fun with the students by getting them interested in reading and they enjoy the books. I also like to tell riddles and jokes to keep them laughing.

What are your other interests?

I live on a farm and I like the work. I spent my working career (23 yrs) working for low income housing through the weatherization program.

What books do you read with the children? The kids like Lego books, Sonic the Hedgehog books and Dog Man, too.

Please contact Sabrina Ricci with ideas or questions re: newsletter at RIFOutreach@ gmail.com







Shoba Chengalur-Smith

In which school and with what age group do you work? I worked with first graders from Pleasant Valley Elementary for two years and this year I'm working with two first graders at Woodlawn Elementary.

How did you get involved with RIF? I'm a Professor Emeritus of Information Systems at the School of Business at the University at Albany. I heard of the work that RIF does with Schenectady kids, and I believe it's important. I've always loved to read and I wanted to help develop that passion among young children.

How do you make reading fun? I try to make the books and stories interactive by changing my voice as I read different characters or asking the kids questions about what they think is going to happen next and connecting it with their lives.

What are your hobbies? I love to travel and just returned from a family vacation to the Galapagos islands. I'm also an avid gardener and currently volunteer as a Master Gardener with Cornell Cooperative extension at Central Park in Schenectady.

What is your favorite children's book?

recently read "That's Not a Hippopotamus" by Juliette MacIver, to a little boy who is often distracted. He and I were both captured by the way the story developed and tried to guess which exotic animals were featured on each page. The illustrations were so detailed that he had me go back and re-read the book to see what we had missed in the first reading!