



THE READING IS FUN NEWSLETTER

April 2025

RIF's Fresh Look: Check Out Our New Website!

On April 16, 2025, The Reading Is Fun Program unveiled a new website at www.readingisfun.org. It features a modern look & lots of new information. Reading Partner Sabrina Ricci, who also works on RIF's communications & fundraising, created the content and teamed with a designer to make it happen.

The website shares how RIF helps, the impact of the programs, & ways to become involved in this dynamic organization. Please share the new site with your family & friends!

Comments or questions? Email RIFOutreach@gmail.com

Don't miss:

- "Reading Partners in Action" video featuring Paula Metzner, Andrew Shapiro, & Libby Horn
- SCSD admin & teachers sharing stories on how RIF impacts students
- Al Magid discussing RIF's development & hopes for future
- Pleasant Valley Pre-K teacher Ruth Grisham video on impact
- Highlights of our generous sponsors, grantors, & donors
- Mary Batzinger on power of a good book on a young reader
- Profiles of RIF Leadership Team
- Online donation portal
- And much much more!

RIF Is Very Grateful To Our Generous 2025 Scrabble-Rama Sponsors

Scrabble Superstars \$1,000 & up

Word Wizards \$750-999



Letter Legends \$500-749



Tile Transformers \$250-499



Jan Gallas
in memory of
John Gallas



90 years young, Joe Daviero Celebrates For RIF

In March 2025, Connie Palmieri held a surprise birthday celebration for her father Joe Daviero's 90th birthday. When it came to gifts, she told her guests that Joe would like donations to be made to *The Reading Is Fun Program* in memory of his beloved wife, Jane. In turn, Joe's friends and family generously sent donations to RIF.

Daughter Connie explained that supporting "RIF was a natural fit for him, since Mom was such a passionate volunteer tutor, helping kids who were struggling with reading. He really wanted to support a cause she'd care about. He decided to donate to help buy books for children, carrying on her legacy."

At 90, Joe keeps busy daily working construction with his son. He lives independently and keeps the family well-stocked with Italian pepper sticks! In good weather, you may find him kayaking on the Sacandaga, where he has a camp, or camping in the Adirondacks with his family.

RIF is so grateful to Joe, Connie, friends, & family for their remarkable gifts. We wish Joe many many more happy birthdays. "A cent'anni!"

April Reading Partner Update

At this point in the 2024-2025 school year, 101 RIF Reading Partners are working with 239 students.

Welcome to our newest Reading Partners! Kristen Quinn (at MLK in Kindergarten) & Janet Woodworth (at Pleasant Valley in Kindergarten).

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



April's Reading Partner training

RIF at Keane Elementary School's Earth Day



Mary Batzinger, Jan Gallas, a SCSD High School volunteer & Dr. Cotto on April 5, 2025 giving out books to Keane students at Earth Day.

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Presently RIF has 102 volunteers reading with 247 students and 89 teachers in Schenectady's 11 elementary schools.

The Reading is Fun Program (RIF) mobilizes volunteers to reinforce reading-readiness as well as conversational and vocabulary skills with Schenectady's students in Pre-K through 3rd grade.

During the month of April customers may choose a book to donate to RIF and receive a 20% discount. The RIF Program is in need of early reader books with diverse characters (we can help you choose!)

More info at www.readingisfun.org

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2025 Scrabble-Rama Recap

Our 5th Annual Scrabble-Rama fundraiser event, held on April 5th, 2025, was a big success! We had a record number of sponsors, teams, & donations. We are grateful to the organizers, sponsors, donors, players, & volunteers who all made this event so fantastic. See p.1 for a list of sponsors, & please enjoy the event photos here!



Superintendent Cotto addressing crowd



Winning team "Scrabble Sisters" (l) & 2nd place "Chanarama" (r)



3rd place "District Office Teaching & Learning" (above).



Reading Partner Profiles

Marty Delmonico



Mark with an artistic reading friend

Mark Vermilyea

Where and with what age group do you work?

Howe Elementary, 1st grade, Cathy Curtis.

Why did you get involved with RIF? I started last January, & couldn't start in the fall because I was recovering from cancer treatment. I've been involved with other reading and mentoring programs for decades.

How do you make reading fun? Go beyond what's on the page into their related experiences and ideas; explore together. Also do drawing related to the reading.

What else do you do for fun? I'm a retired engineer - spent 43 years at GE Research designing MRI magnets, x-ray tubes and parts using composite materials. I sing and play guitar at local venues with three different musical duets, and love cycling and hiking. Married to a retired teacher with three overeducated kids and one grandchild! I'm also a handyman with Umbrella of the Capital District, helping seniors with home maintenance and repairs.

What is your favorite book? The Giving Tree, Shel Silverstein, or Sylvester and the Magic Pebble, William Steig

Where and with whom do you work?

Pleasant Valley Elementary, with Kindergarteners in Tasha Ferguson's class.

Why did you get involved with RIF? I

learned about RIF from the newspaper & friends. I liked the idea of working one-on-one with a student. I was a classroom teacher for 32 yrs in Scotia-Glenville & Niskayuna, and it was rare to spend more than 5-10 minutes with one child. I also love the idea of giving children a book to foster their interest in reading. This is my 3rd year in the RIF program.

How do you make reading fun? When I first start my year with a child, I try different activities. We might play rhyming games, use markers, crayons, or colored pencils to trace letters or do a coloring activity. Some children will like working in a journal. It's a discovery process.

What are your hobbies? I love the outdoors so I try to get outside daily. My favorite walk is in a nature preserve or a park. I take yoga and essentric exercise classes and meet friends for lunch. I have a bookclub, which has met for 17 years. I became a grandmother about a year & a half ago, and seeing my grandson gives me the most pleasure.



Marty enjoying magnificent Crater Lake, OR