# THE READING IS FUN PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

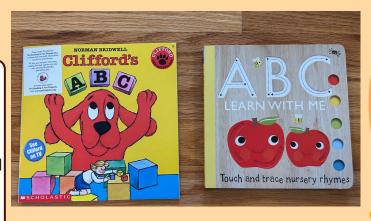
October 2025

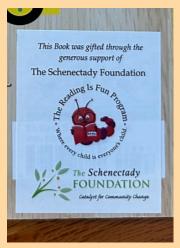
### It's "Fall Into The Alphabet" Time of Year!

On September 25 & 26, 2025, the RIF team delivered over 1,100 alphabet books to all of SCSD's Pre-K and Kindergarten students. in RIF's second annual "Fall Into The Alphabet" (FITA) project. FITA gives every one of SCSD's youngest readers and their familes a new beautiful alphabet book to take home and begin their learning journey together. This year, FITA has been generously funded by a grant from The Schenectady Foundation.

Both teachers and students were excited to receive the books. This year RIF selected the book "ABC Learn With Me" for the PreK students, which has tracks so the children can trace letters with their fingers. For Kindergartners, RIF chose "Clifford's ABCs", with colorful pictures corresponding to each letter.

RIF is very grateful for Schenectady Foundation's support! At RIF, Sabrina Ricci led the FITA project again this year. Also thanks to Jan Gallas, Mary Batzinger, Al Magid & Mary Lou Russo for their support and guidance.













## Reading Partners who served five or more years (alphabetical):

**Barbara Armstrong Susan Burton Deb Carey Doris Chow Connie Clarke Sue Crawford Mary Batzinger Paul Deltry** Susanne Doyle **Wanda Fischer** Frank Giordano **Sandy Gregory Libby Horn Linda Knipper** Tina Lee **Meg Levine** Martha Longo **Sally Magid** Joan Matalavage **Wendy Miller** Indiana Nash **Anita Niezgoda Margaret Novak** Suzi O'Brien **Larry Pierce Marsha Pompillo Ricki Shapiro Mary Jane Shave Connie Young** 



### RIF 's Welcome Back Celebrates & Inspires

On Monday, September 15th, the Reading is Fun Program held a "Welcome Back" event for our Reading Partners. Over 50 volunteers enjoyed an inspirational video, great conversation and delicious food! A video described how making connections to kids is essential to their learning. All of our volunteers know this but it doesn't hurt to be reminded of how important a Reading Partner is to a student!

Next the RIF board shared some brief remarks which were followed by a recognition ceremony. The ceremony thanked Reading Partners with 5 or more years of service to the program. Each Reading Partner received a beautiful bookmark along with a handmade card. There were over 20 recipients!

RIF would like to thank Jan Gallas for her hard work in putting together the lovely evening. We would also like to thank Villa Italia for its donation of a large tray of cookies. We would like to thank all of our Reading Partners who attended! Hopefully, you came away from the evening excited for the new school year! – Deb Carey

### RIF's Literacy Match Challenge Update

**Thank you** 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 right.) Also, a reminder:

- Every donation of any amount counts and 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 PO Box 9437 Schenectady 12309.

We need everyone's help to reach our goal of \$30,000!

Thank you!





## Photos from RIF's Welcome Back















## THANK YOU TO LITERACY MATCH SUPPORTERS!

### **Literacy Visionaries**

Mary Batzinger
Marilyn J. Chase Family Trust
Alvin & Sally Magid

#### **Literacy Leaders**

Michele Ricci-Bell
Fredrick Bremer-Bremer Forensic
Consultants PLLC
Vicki Bremer
Deb Carey

Jan Gallas Kevin and Suzin Healy Linda Knipper

Larry Lewis

Sandra McIntyre

Sheila McMenamin

Jeffrey Murtagh

Rebecca ODonnell

**Larry Pierce** 

Kristen & Sean Quinn

Frances B. Ricci

Sabrina Ricci

Valerie Rivera

Mary Lou Russo

Ricki D Shapiro

Schenectada Chapter NSDAR

Mary Suminski

Carla Suna

Stephanie Warlik

#### <u>Literacy Impact Makers</u>

Anonymous
Susan Burton
Danielle Chapola
Constance Clarke
Bruce Connolly

## **Reading Partner Spotlight**



**Connie Clarke** 

Where and with what age group do you work?
IThis is my fourth year volunteering for RIF at
Zoller Elementary School with kindergarteners.
Prior to that I volunteered with RIF at Howe
Elementary School & Lincoln Elementary School.

Why did you join RIF? As a retired special education teacher, working with United Cerebral Palsy and then with the Early Intervention Program, my life long focus has been to teach and work with young children through the joy of learning. RIF is the perfect fit for me.

How do you make reading fun? I write children's books with the intention of making learning life's lessons fun. In a recent collaborative project with BOCES, NERIC, an ASL interpreter, a student from the deaf community, and BookCreator software, my most recent Clarke Fable, 'The Squirrel and the Acorns' has a QR code on the back cover which, when scanned, provides a digital version with sign language video and audio support. This teaching tool makes reading fun, more accessible, and engaging in inclusive settings for children from the deaf community.

What are your other interests? Volunteering at Sunnyview Rehab Hosp. delivering books & magazines to patients, and visiting Schenectady & Albany elementary schools to read my stories and provide hands-on activities for the children that support the life lessons they learn from the fables.

#### Vicki Bremer



Where and with what age group do you work? II work at Van Corlaer with a first-grade student. This is my fourth year with the same teacher. The previous three years, I worked with boys; this year I will be working with a girl.

Why did you join RIF? When I retired, I wanted to do something with children and education. A friend told me about RIF because she knew Al Magid. It has been a great fit!

I was a classroom teacher in England. When I came to the US, I was not certified and could not teach. So, I found an adjacent career as an editor in educational publishing. I worked almost exclusively on reading and language arts programs. Editors read the latest educational research to plan a program. They choose stories, articles, and poems for the student anthologies. It was a very fulfilling career to think every day of the students and teachers who would use the products I helped create.

How do you make reading fun? Kids enjoy being read to, especially if you read with expression or different voices for the characters. I try to find books that match their interests, but I also try to broaden their interests with something unexpected. My last little boy liked to draw a picture about the book. At the end of the year, he enjoyed writing a few sentences as a book report. All the kids I've worked with have loved playing games. "Reading" the child is essential, so I can meet them where they are.

What are your other interests? I like to knit & sew. I belong to a book club. In spring & fall I garden. I have a husband, a daughter, and a son. We have a 15 month old grandson. He is a delight!