

Compassionate communities head back to school with Reading Partners

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To: [Steve Johnston](#)

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To the Reading Partners community,

Similar to many of you, the horrific events in Las Vegas are weighing heavy on my heart and mind and I grieve for the many victims of this senseless violence. I have been touched by the opportunity to speak about this with several members of our community over the past week and I am so proud to work shoulder-to-shoulder with people who strive every day to make our world a better place. We clearly face many ongoing challenges as a broader society, but on a smaller scale, I am constantly inspired by the propensity for human kindness, compassion, and selflessness, certainly on full display in the Reading Partners community.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that — I have decided to stick to love...Hate is too great a burden to bear."

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

As National Hispanic Heritage Month comes to a close and as we immerse ourselves in the new school year, I know we can count on positive role models like our thousands of volunteers and the many other supporters of our mission to take action to provide light and love for our youngest generation. The power of education coupled with the compassion of a caring community is a strong formula for a bright future.

Launching into a new school year

Welcome to the 2017-18 school year. As always, summer is anything but restful at Reading Partners as we close out one year and prepare for the next.

Over the past three months we've welcomed over 300 AmeriCorps and VISTA members who have started a year of service with Reading Partners. That number will grow to 325 in the coming months, comprising nearly 70 percent of our organization's workforce. You'll see them busy at work coaching students and volunteers, engaging members of the community, and raising much-needed funds to support our programs.

In addition, our efforts to open doors to more than 200 reading centers and recruit 13,000 volunteer tutors are well underway! As of the end of September, we have already enrolled almost 5,800 tutors (more than 11 times the number at the same

point last year)! Since the number of sessions is so critical to student growth, there is no more important time of the year to engage volunteers than right now. Put simply, the more tutors we can get into reading centers early in the year, the more invaluable one-on-one sessions students will ultimately receive.

Every member of the Reading Partners community can play a role in helping us achieve the goal of providing top-notch tutoring to 11,000 elementary students. Please spread the word and tell the people you know about the opportunity to become a reading partner. Those simple conversations help make a lasting impact in so many ways.

For those of you who have not yet had a chance to see our collective results from last year, here are a few quick highlights:

- More than 11,200 students received one-on-one reading support in 225 partner schools across 14 regions
- Nearly 400,000 tutoring sessions delivered by volunteers
- 83% of Reading Partners students met or exceeded their primary, end-of-year literacy growth goal (and 90% of K-2 students mastered key foundational reading skills needed to read at grade level)
- In all regions, at least 96% of teachers report that Reading Partners was valuable to their school and at least 90% of volunteers were satisfied with their experience

Those percentages speak volumes about our amazing program and people!

IMPACT REPORT

[Navigate](#) to all 14 regional pages to see local results.

Strategic planning

In partnership with [The Bridgespan Group](#), we recently initiated a strategic planning process designed to help us clarify our long-term aspirations as an organization, establish stronger guidelines for how to more efficiently and effectively support regional operations, and set us on a path to greater financial sustainability. The strategic planning process will build on the efforts we've taken over the last several months to shore up our current operations and set us on a path to impacting many more thousands of students in the future. We will communicate more about the progress of this important initiative in the months to come.

Celebrating our growing team

We are thrilled to welcome **Nolene Fabre** to the Reading Partners team. She will be serving as our new chief financial officer starting later this month. Nolene is a talented and highly compassionate financial leader with over two decades of experience in private sector finance and accounting and ten years of experience in the public/nonprofit sector as a board member, treasurer, and volunteer. Nolene is an avid supporter of the mission of Reading Partners and she is excited to get to

work.

Congratulations also to **Karen Casanova** who—after successfully launching and leading the Twin Cities region for several years—is joining our executive team as senior vice president of development. Additionally, we recently welcomed executive directors Lisa Bracken (North Texas) and Justin Harlan (Tulsa), and named new executive director, Brooke Rivers (Twin Cities) and interim executive director, Cassy Charyn (Seattle).

Thank you all, as always, for the many ways you support our mission. Here's to an exciting and transformational 2017-18 school year!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karine Apollon".

Karine Apollon
CEO, Reading Partners

Other highlights



Reading Partners honored in Literacy Awards

The Library of Congress Literacy Awards program recently honored 15 organizations (including Reading Partners!) for outstanding work in the field of literacy and implementation of best practices in literacy promotion. Our selection includes a \$5,000 prize, the opportunity to attend the annual conference and awards ceremony at the Library of Congress and a profile of Reading Partners in the 2017 awards publication reaching nearly 2,000 literacy organizations and educators.

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Year one of two-year Child Trends study complete

In September, Reading Partners completed the first year of a two-year evaluation being conducted in partnership with Child Trends, a leading national nonprofit research organization. The study explores the characteristics and experiences of Reading Partners' tutors and takes a first look at social-emotional learning outcomes for our students. Final study findings will be released in fall 2018.

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WYPR: Building literacy one-on-one

Our Baltimore team is featured on WYPR's On the Record program. Jeffrey Zwillenberg, our executive director in Baltimore, as well as a school principal and a second-year volunteer spoke about the incredible impact of our program and the amazing students who benefit.

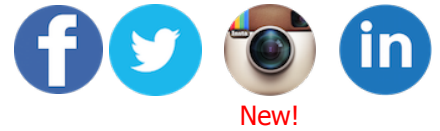
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Gen2Gen Reads

Generation to Generation (Gen2Gen) inspires adults over 50 to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth, particularly those growing up in challenging circumstances. This fall, Gen2Gen is making childhood literacy the focus of their outreach efforts with Reading Partners featured as a core partner of their national campaign.


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