



2015-2016 LITERACY INITIATIVES

SUMMARY

According to the Children's Defense Fund, a direct correlation exists between literacy at a young age and general health. Furthermore, students not reading at grade level by Grade 3 are more likely to live, at best, in poverty and worst, to become incarcerated. It also leads to poor health literacy, affecting people's ability to search for and use health information, adopt healthy behaviors and act on important public health matters. With that in mind, St. Luke's Network has developed a multi-pronged approach to help meet the literacy needs of children, with a focus on children from birth through third grade.

Currently the literacy program is involved in the following: Maternal-child health programs, Reading Rocks!, Dr. Seuss Day, Reach Out and Read, Little Free Libraries, Book Drives, and Book Distributions to children and families.

HIGHLIGHTS

Maternal-child health programs

Early literacy is a continuous developmental process that begins in the first years of life. The maternal child health programs (NFP, PATH, and VNAC) offered through the Visiting Nurse Association of St. Luke's encourage mothers to talk and read to their infants beginning in pregnancy, and continuing throughout childhood. The goal of early literacy is to not have children learn to read at an early age, but rather to appreciate the enjoyment of books, the importance of positive interactions between young children and adults, and the critical role of literacy-rich experiences. Reading to children increases their vocabulary and language and literacy skills while at the same time improving concentration, curiosity and memory. To promote early literacy, new and gently used books are distributed to all families according to the age of the child(ren) and the nurses work individually with the parent/care provider to assure that books are incorporated into the family's routine as a way of promoting future school success. The NFP and PATH programs use evidence based programs to work with families on early literacy as well as other areas of development and outcomes are measured for each family served.

Reading Rocks!

Reading Rocks! is an innovative community collaboration, which began in 2009 in association with Lehigh University to boost literacy among elementary age students who are reading below grade level. Volunteers from local colleges and universities (Moravian College, Lehigh University, Northampton Community College, and Muhlenberg College) serve as student mentors to work closely with the children in the programs.

The number of Reading Rocks! programs has grown over the years and in 2015-2016 was implemented at two additional elementary schools in Bethlehem (Fountain Hill and William Penn) and two additional schools in Allentown (McKinley and Cleveland), bringing the total to six schools.

Bethlehem:

- Fountain Hill, grades K-2
 - Grade-wide Reading Rocks! Challenge* – 317 students
 - After School Mentor Program – 30 students (all 30 students improvement in their scores)
- William Penn, grades K-2
 - Grade-wide Reading Rocks! Challenge* – 102 students
 - After School Mentor Program – 19 students (all students showed improvement in their scores)
- Donegan, grades K-2
 - Grade-wide Reading Rocks! Challenge* – 168 students
 - After School Mentor Program – 30 students (all students showed improvement in their scores)

*DIBEL scores will be available later in the year.

HIGHLIGHTS Cont...

Allentown:

- Union Terrace, grades 1 and 2
After School Mentor Program –of the 41students who participated, 38 students improved their Guided Reading Levels scores and 3 maintained their level.
- McKinley, grades 1 and 2 **
After School Mentor Program – 10 students participated (spring pilot)
- Cleveland, grades 1,2 and 3 **
After School Mentor Program – 11 students participated (spring pilot)

** Baseline Guided Reading Level scores were collected on the students enrolled in these programs. Scores will be evaluated next school year.

Miners:

Panther Valley – Literacy needs are supported by another reading program; however, St. Luke’s provides books through the adopt-a-school program for the Intermediate and High Schools.

Anderson:

Five Points Elementary – will be initiated in fall 2016 with third grade students

Little Free Libraries

The Little Free Library (LFL) program was initiated in 2014-2015 and is an opportunity for the St. Luke’s Community Health Department to promote literacy in high risk communities surrounding our adopted schools as well as at the St. Luke’s entities themselves. Funded in part by the Auxiliary of St. Luke’s Hospital, Five Little Free Libraries are currently maintained in the following locations: St. Luke’s Anderson Campus (two); DeFranco Elementary School, Bangor (one); William Penn Elementary School, Bethlehem (one); McKinley Elementary School, Allentown (one). A sixth LFL was given to Union Terrace Elementary School, Allentown, by community members and is supplied with books by St. Luke’s. In addition, three LFL’s are on order for Miners Campus and four are being purchased with St. Luke’s Auxiliary grant funds (Cleveland Elementary School (Allentown), Panther Valley Elementary School (Lansford), and Phillipsburg Elementary School (Phillipsburg) and Quakertown Campus.

Dr. Seuss Day

The National Education Association’s Read Across America is an annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2, the birthday of children’s author Dr. Seuss. The St. Luke’s event was held in late February and early March of this year, with all six St. Luke’s entities reaching out to schools in their areas to read *Green Eggs and Ham*. 26 schools and 216 classrooms participated in the event, reading to over 4,500 children. This year the planning for inclement weather, coupled with the milder winter, meant that there were no cancelled reading events.

Book Distributions via Mobile Youth Health Centers, Clinics, and Community Events

The goal is to distribute books to children via the above programs (Maternal Child Health programs, Reading Rocks!, Adopt-a-Schools, and Little Free Libraries) as well as the mobile health vans going out into the community, KidsCare clinics, at various community events and to literacy partners. Last year over 8,500 books were distributed as follows:

Schools (including Reading Rocks!)	3,582
Little Free Libraries	1,111
Vans and Clinics	979
Maternal Child Health	1,135
Community Programs/Events	<u>1,773</u>
	8,580

Book Drives and Collections

Books are received through the St. Luke’s Book Drive (fall 2015) as well as book drives and collections by community partners (Penn State Lehigh Valley, Weissenberg Elementary School, Cops ‘n’ Kids, AAUW, as well as private individuals. A total of 13,233 books were received in FY 2016. The books collected are sorted, labeled and then distributed to the literacy programs listed above. The book drive for 2016 will be held in September and October of 2016.

SUCCESES

- Dr. Seuss Day was held in school districts associated with all six hospital entities:
 - Bethlehem: 3 schools, 43 classrooms and 842 students participated. An additional school was provided with books for 11 classrooms serving 222 students
 - Quakertown: 3 schools, 8 classrooms and 234 students participated
 - Miners: 9 schools, 48 classrooms and 1,042 students participated
 - Anderson: 1 school, 25 classrooms, and 550 students participated. An additional school was provided with books for 4 classrooms
 - Allentown: 3 schools, 37 classrooms and 794 students participated
 - Warren: 5 schools, 43 classrooms and 878 students participated
- Reading Rocks! programs are increasing in number and are helping students improve their reading scores:
 - Donegan: all students showed improvement in their scores
 - Fountain Hill: all students showed improvement in their scores
 - William Penn: all students showed improvement in their scores
 - Union Terrace: 38 students improved their scores and 3 maintained their level
 - New programs have been initiated at: Fountain Hill, William Penn, McKinley, and Cleveland.
- Little Free Libraries are an effective way to promote literacy in the community, with the help of St. Luke's Auxiliary.
 - 5 Little Free Libraries are currently maintained, with more to be added soon.

CHALLENGES & NEXT STEPS

- The challenges of the Literacy Initiatives include the coordination of the various and wide-ranging programs that fall under this umbrella. We rely heavily on dedicated volunteers to work with students in the schools as well as to sort and label the books as they come in. Reliable volunteers are difficult to locate and keep.
- School districts have many ways to measure student progress in reading, making it difficult to measure students' progress in reading. We will continue to work with the school districts to provide consistent measurements for the students in the Reading Rocks! programs.



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