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### WHAT IS REadingADvantage?

REadingADvantage, Inc., is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt nonprofit corporation, founded April 2014, to serve children and families through family literacy projects, designed to promote language and vocabulary development as well as reading comprehension and proficiency. To date we have provided over **120 Parent Power! workshops** to more than **1,000 parents** in Contra Costa County, California, and given out almost **20,000 free books**. Our workshop message is simple: read to your child (from birth to age 8) twenty minutes each day, and you will greatly improve your child's chance of success in school and in life.

## Why we do what we do.

*“Access to books and educational material is the single biggest barrier to literacy development in the United States and beyond. If we can solve the problem of access, we will be well on the road to realizing education parity – a goal which has eluded this country for generations.” (Susan B. Neuman, Ph.D. University of Michigan, Ctr. For Improvement of Early Reading Achievement).*

Research shows there is a significant educational and literacy gap among the children of various socio-economic groups in contemporary America. We know that 80% of the development of a child's brain happens by age 3, which leads us to understand that the roots of this disparity begin at a very early age (*California First 5*). And there is no secret to how it begins. Low-income American children grow up in houses that have one book for every 300 children while middle and higher income children have 15 books for every child (*Susan Neuman, 2006*). But, what can we do about it?

At REadingADvantage we believe we CAN do something. By pulling together with other nonprofits, local libraries, schools and funders, we can supply children with books from birth on. We can provide low-income homes with a home library. We can talk to parents and encourage them to read every day to their children. Together, we will make a difference ... one child, one book at a time.

# 2015 Highlights—A Year in Review

## Below are some of the highlights of the past year:

2015 was a year of growth, as the following numbers show:

	2013	2014	2015
Workshops	2	39	79
Community Events	2	11	17
Recipients	560	2,447	5,699
Books Distributed	750	5,511	13,570

### Grants Awarded to Date:

George Miller Youth Fund	\$4,592
DOW CAP	\$2,000
Los Medanos Health Care District	\$2,500
WalMart Community Grant	\$1,000
Keller Canyon Mitigation Fund	\$3,000
Pittsburg Library	\$2,500

worth of books

### Parent Power! Workshop Partner Agencies

- Contra Costa County Head Start
- West County Detention Facility
- Juvenile Hall
- UJIMA
- Antioch Unified School District
- Brentwood Union School District
- Pittsburg Unified School District
- African American Health Conductors
- Black Infant Health
- El Pueblo Children's Library
- DeAnza Gardens Children's Library
- Housing Authority of Contra Costa
- WIC—Pittsburg Health Svcs Dept.
- Village Community Resource Center
- A Place of Learning
- Contra Costa County Libraries

New for 2015! Book Drives with the following partners:

- Employment and Human Services Department
- Cub Scout Pack 21, Brentwood
- Cub Scout Pack 450, Antioch
- Wells Fargo Bank
- Saklan School, Moraga, 4th Grade



### Speciality Events

- BUSD Kindergarten Readiness Fair
- Housing Authority Early Literacy Events
- Grandma's Tea, Pittsburg (thank you to Assemblyman Jim Frazier for sponsoring!)



## Donations Always Welcome

There are many ways you can help REadingADvantage reach more families:

- **Financial Donations.** Since REadingADvantage is a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit corporation, any donations you make are tax-deductible
- **Donations of books** are always welcomed and appreciated. Please contact Shirley Kalinowski on (925) 550-6021 to make arrangements for drop off/pick up.
- **Register REading ADvantage with the following retailers** and whenever you spend with them, a portion of the sale will go to READ:
  - ◇ Target Red Card
  - ◇ Fresh 'n' Easy (Safeway)
  - ◇ AmazonSmile
  - ◇ Raley's Club Card
- We are particularly looking to **raise funds for the purchase of recordable books** for our incarcerated parents programs at the West County Detention Facility and Juvenile Hall. (More about this inspiring program in our Spring E-Newsletter.)





## Spotlight on Shirley Kalinowski—READ President

As president of REadingADvantage, Shirley works with families and the community to encourage a love of reading from an early age, providing books and materials where needed.

### But what motivated her to start up the venture?

After retiring from a 30-year career in social services, Shirley found herself helping a grandson who is on the autism spectrum. She read to him nightly and, now at 12 years old, the routine continues to bring comfort to both. "If I stop reading, he immediately focuses back on me, insisting I continue reading. I truly believe that frequent reading to him, from the time he was born, was instrumental in him being as academically successful as he is today."

And, because she wanted to see every child have that opportunity, she co-founded REadingADvantage with friends Deborah Polk and Sherry Dorfman, organizing programs and workshops for parents with children up to 8 years old.

"We hope by taking our workshops, parents will begin a daily routine of reading to their young children, that will last for many years to come."

To date, the group has hosted some 120 **Parent Power!** workshops for more than 1,000 low-income parents, and given away almost 20,000 books. Never was the phrase *from small acorns mighty oak trees*

*grow*, more appropriate.

In the words of Dana Eaton, Brentwood Union Superintendent, "She is an amazing lady. She is tireless and inspiring."

Shirley's own view of the work she does is summed up by an experience she had during a follow-up workshop:

"When I asked if reading to their children every day seemed to be helping, one mom shared it had made a "tremendous difference in her child," adding that, after just one month of reading, her 5-year-old son's vocabulary increased. To hear this made me feel like our program was right on target."

*(Article based on an interview with Trine Gallegos of Contra Costa Times)*

## Upcoming Events

Look out for the following events and join us if you can:

- Brentwood Elementary Schools
- Pittsburg Elementary Schools

We will be hosting our **Parent Power!** workshops at all elementary schools in Brentwood and Pittsburg over the next four months. For information about dates and locations, contact us at

## Reading Tips

### Words ... words ... words ...

how do babies develop their vocabulary? Quite simply, they learn from hearing the words of the people around them. "If the child has never heard the word, the child will never say the word; and if you have neither heard it nor said it, it's pretty tough to read it and to write it." (From Jim Trelease's introduction in *Read-aloud Rhymes for the Very Young*, selected by Jack Prelutsky, illustrated by Marc Brown, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.)

## Volunteers: How YOU can help

If you have some spare time, and would like to get involved in making an impact in kids' lives, here are some ways you can help:

- Assembling Workshop Packets
- Coordinating Workshop Schedules
- Developing Resources
- Distributing Books to Non-profits
- Fundraising
- Leading family Literacy Workshops
- Reading Stories to Children

**If you are interested, please contact Deborah Polk at (925) 698-0098**



Miss Contra Costa 2015 reads to children at Pittsburg Library

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### Useful Links to Reading Sites

- [Brentwood Union School District—Early Literacy Initiative](#)
- [Contra Costa Library](#)
- [First 5 California](#)
- [Raising a Reader](#)
- [Read from the start, read for life](#)
- [Reading to Babies](#)



### The 30-Million Word Gap by Age 3

This 1995 Hart and Risley study showed that by age three, an average child in a professional family would have heard almost 45 million words, while an average child in a low-income family would have heard only 13 million words...creating a 30 million word gap catastrophe.