raising readers

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Promoting Early Childhood Literacy for All Maine Children

raisingreaders.org

A Statewide Network: Raising Readers Partners with nearly 350 Healthcare Sites and 1,600 Healthcare Providers Across Maine.

100% of Maine hospitals, birth centers, and health centers participate in Raising Readers.

Maine ranks #1

78% of Maine families read to their children four days a week or more, the highest percentage in the United States.*

*National Study of Children's Health, 2018

Participating Sites:
- Birth Center
- Birth Center and Health Center
- Health Center
- Hospital

To see a full list of participating Raising Readers sites, visit **raisingreaders.org**

Sharing the love of books and reading

How an imaginary library sparked a statewide literacy program

I've always had a burning passion for books and reading. While other five-year-olds were outside playing, I spent hours inside gluing index card-filled pockets to the back covers of all of my books. I called my creation the "Anne Fun Library." I wasted no opportunity to read to my younger sisters, and I lined my bedroom with the aforementioned except my dolls and stuffed animals, who listened patiently to me reading aloud. My dream was to make my little library as magical as the public library downtown, where my dad took me every week to borrow as many books as were allowed. Those weekly trips continued well into my teenage years. The Bobbsey Twins, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and Sue Barton were my friends and them all vanishingly before transitioning to "real" literature in high school and college.

I'm convinced that the home Fun Library experience is the spark that kindled a critical conversation with Owen Wells almost 30 years ago. Owen and I met in the Maine Medical Center a Maine/Dartmouth board member at the time. Owen had attended a conference on ground-breaking research linking reading and brain development among babies and toddlers. Owen, then a pediatrician, and I, then a director of Community Health Improvement to consider how books and reading could be used as an intervention, to promote the emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioral development, and overall health of all Maine children, starting at birth. His big idea was to integrate books and counseling about reading in hospital birth centers and into routine pediatric well-child visits in community health centers.

The author, Deb Dwarkish, attempts to engage her brother in some fun!

We had some help putting the pieces together. Owen's relationship with the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy informed the conceptual framework. The Reach Out and Read initiative, founded by two Boston pediatricians, generously shared research findings and their operational processes. Funding from the Libra Foundation - for almost every aspect of the organization's work - allowed us to demonstrate that Raising Readers is successful. But the real winners are a generation of almost 300,000 Maine children, from newborns to those who are now teeny-somethings, who have learned the darkest delight of reading and having a library of high-quality books to call their very own.

As I retire from MaineHealth in 2019, I salute the true heroes and heroines of this work: the parents who read to their children every day, the Maine Medical Center students and grandparents, artists, illustrators and publishers, Owen and the Libra Foundation Board of Trustees, MaineHealth, Northern Light Health, and so many other partners and collaborators.

It's been Some Fun, indeed.

Deb Dwarkish

Deborah A. Dwarkish
Senior Vice President,
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STACK THEM UP

Celebrating 18 Years of Raising Readers

Over 2.8 million books given to over 272,000 Maine children since 2000

67,000 Maine children served by Raising Readers in 2018

160,000 Books distributed to Maine children in 2018

302	42	1,600
Health Centers	Hospitals and Birth Centers	Healthcare Providers

Parent's Perspective

"We love Raising Readers books! We're so happy to get a new one at each well check. The books seem well thought out as far as age appropriateness - my son is always super interested in his new book!"
- Amanda, Springvale, Maine

Provider's Perspective

"Our families are always so excited to receive a book with their visit. We recently had a new family from Nigeria with an 8-week-old baby and they couldn't think us enough for the baby book and wanted to know all about your program!"
- Nurse Carol, Root Cellar Pediatric Clinic

11,200 Totes distributed in 2018

Privately funded by the Libra Foundation since 2000

Data are gross estimates.

HIGHLIGHTS

In 2018, Raising Readers began offering a book at 30-month well-child visits to all participating sites. Currently, 120 healthcare sites distribute the title as part of their regular well-child visit schedule.

Raising Readers celebrated "Bug Day" and the 5-year-old book selection, *The Bugliest Bug*, with Maine illustrator Scott Nash and Maine families in August. The event was hosted in collaboration with the Children's Museum and Theater of Maine in Portland.

Raising Readers was featured on News Center Maine's show, 207, in April. The segment showcased the program's success in promoting early literacy for 18 years and the critical role healthcare providers play in encouraging families to read to their children, starting from birth.

ONLINE COMMUNITY

Through its social media platforms, Raising Readers has established a national and global reputation for sharing educational and engaging early literacy posts with families, educators, healthcare professionals, literacy groups, home visitors, librarians, and many others from all around the world (on five continents and counting!).

FACEBOOK 78,800 followers

INSTAGRAM 2,400 followers

PINTEREST 1,600 followers

TWITTER 900 followers

The Raising Readers Blog

The Raising Readers Blog is an online space where readers can explore early literacy topics like reading tips for children of all ages, book recommendations, library and community reading events, and more!

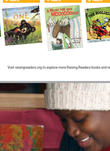
BLOG

Interested in seeing what we're posting?
Subscribe to our blog on raisingreaders.org/blog.

raisingreaders.org • info@raisingreaders.org • 800-397-3263

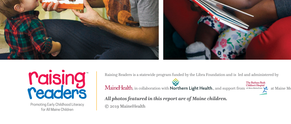
IT'S ALL ABOUT BOOKS!

Maine healthcare providers share the love of books and reading each time they give a high-quality, developmentally appropriate book following a baby's birth and well-child visits. Each book helps build families' home libraries and encourages shared read-aloud experiences between children and their caregivers.



2018 BOOK COLLECTION: Which book is your family's favorite?

Visit raisingreaders.org to explore more Raising Readers books and resources.



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Raising Readers is a statewide program funded by the Libra Foundation and is led and administered by MaineHealth, in collaboration with Northern Light Health, and support from Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center.

All photos featured in this report are of Maine children.
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