

# ANNUAL REPORT

Raising Readers in Story County

## Bonding Through Reading

Families are our passion. We build a literacy foundation for families through our Reach Out and Read program and build upon that foundation through a variety of programs as Raising Readers in Story County works to make sure all Story County children are reading at grade level by third grade.

The Geisler Family has been a Raising Readers family for many years and mom Dellisa shares that the last thing they did as a family before their daughter Ella was born in 2009 was attend Step Into Storybooks!

Dellisa and Jake Geisler have three children, Will, Ella, and Carsten. Ella has participated in summer Reading Buddies and Harrison Barnes Reading Academy. Carsten will be joining his sister at Harrison Barnes Reading Academy this fall and is very excited about it!

Dellisa shares, "Ella is young for her grade (she is a May birthday) and she has always had to work a little bit harder at reading. When Ella was in kindergarten she scored right on the lower cut off for the state FAST test and also had a hard time meeting her reading level for her grade. I had a friend that had done the [Reading Buddies] program and we decided to try it out. Ella's first experience was the summer after her kindergarten year. She was paired up with a lady that was a Gilbert Kindergarten teacher that first summer and it was amazing. Ella loved working with her. That encouraged her to practice reading all summer that year."

Raising Readers in Story County programs are showing parents positive literacy results. Ella started doing RRSC programs when she was a struggling reader in kindergarten and not meeting her grade level expectations.

"Right now," Dellisa says, "Ella is exactly where she needs to be for third grade level expectations and seeks out books on her own to read for fun. I am eager for Carsten to participate this year and see how he grows."



**"The Raising Reader programs are a great way to encourage your children to grow in their literacy skills. It has been beneficial for my kids to have dedicated people that work with them each week. We love the Reading Buddies program and we love Step into Storybooks each year!"**

—Dellisa Geisler



**The mission of Raising Readers in Story County is to improve language and literacy development in children from birth to age 8 and nurture healthy parent child relationships.**

## **RRSC Staff and Leadership**

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*Family Literacy Coordinator*

Lisa Reeves  
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**We offer a special thank  
you to these board  
members whose term  
ended June 2017**

Carol Elbert

Kathryn Merseal

## **From Our Board President**

I'm proud to serve as a member of the board of this organization because I am passionate about literacy and giving children the tools they need to be successful. Our organization lives its mission through partnerships with local schools, service groups, organizations, faith communities and public libraries. We offer many programs throughout the school year and summer to give children extra help with reading skills. We live our mission by getting books into the hands of children and encouraging parents and caregivers to read with children. We live our mission by empowering parents to be their child's first teacher.

We wouldn't be able to continue our mission without the support of our community. We are grateful for the support of our donors. With their help, we are able to give away more books throughout Story County.

We are blessed to have wonderful volunteers who give of their time and energy to support our programs by reading with children or labeling books. We are thrilled to have a dedicated staff who lead our programs and our organization, helping us to achieve our mission.

The past year has been full of growth. As we celebrate our successes and make plans for the future, it will be great to see what we are able to achieve with the support of our community.



**Jennifer Dieter**  
2017-18  
RRSC Board President

## **From Our Executive Director**

As I finish up my second year at RRSC, I continue to be inspired by all the children, volunteers, and families we work with. As a substitute in several of our tutoring programs last school year, I got to work one on one and in small groups with some wonderful children and have great conversations, from what a bear might taste like (strawberries or M&Ms) to what kind of book is the best kind of book (any and all!) to swimming lessons and school uniforms.

One of my favorite stories that I like to share when speaking to groups is one that Family Literacy Coordinator Judy Dahlke shared with me from an experience with her Eastwood programs. "The children who attend Storytime at Eastwood of Ames were excited to hear that they would be able to select two free books as a treat for Trick or Treat from Miss Judy (Storytime Coordinator). The books, provided by Raising Readers in Story County, were spread out on the table so each child could make their own choices. A first grade boy was very pleased with his selections and asked Miss Judy "now when do I need to return these?" Whenever reading books from the Ames Public Library, Miss Judy would make a point of saying that she would be returning the books after Storytime, making it possible for them to check the books out tomorrow. Miss Judy explained that the books were his to keep. As the boy stood, hugging his books, he asked for confirmation that he could write his name in the books. Again, Miss Judy explained that he now owned those books and could certainly write his name in the front of them. On the way out the door, still hugging his books, the boy exclaimed to his friends "These are my first forever books!"

We were able to provide literacy programs and Forever Books to thousands of Story County children this past year because of the support of our communities, school districts, partner organizations and civic and service groups. Thank you for making our work possible!



**Kim Hanna**  
RRSC  
Executive Director

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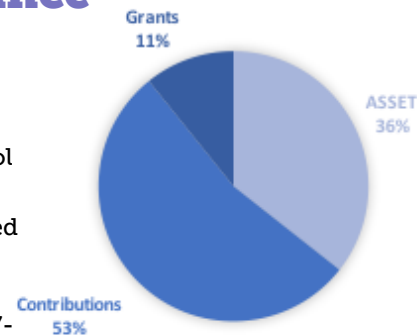
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## RRSC At-A-Glance

- 5837 volunteer hours recorded
- 22,737 minutes read during Harrison Barnes Reading Academy-School Year Tutoring program
- 6967 new and gently-used books donated
- \$44,127.50 added to endowment fund in 2017-\$314,236.86 (market value)



## RRSC Sources of Revenue

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# The Year in Review

## Summer 2016

### K-3 Reading Buddies

84 children and 49 volunteers participated at nine sites in Ames in summer 2016. All of the children who participated in pre- and post-tests at least maintained their reading levels, successfully avoiding the summer slide. This program will be known as Harrison Barnes Reading Academy-Summer Reading Buddies starting in Summer 2018.

### Super K

30 five-year olds spent two weeks learning skills that made them Super Ready for Kindergarten! Children in Ames and Nevada participated in this Transition to Kindergarten program. They were exposed to many of the routines, activities, materials, and skills that they will experience in Kindergarten.

## School Year 2016-17

### Harrison Barnes Reading Academy

Another wonderful year partnering with the Ames Public Library, 16 K-3 students worked one on one with volunteer tutors once a week on their reading and literacy skills. A highlight of the year was Skyping with Harrison Barnes and sharing favorite books with him! This program is being renamed as Harrison Barnes Reading Academy-School Year Tutoring and will also be offered in Nevada for the 2017-18 school year.

### Preschool Reading Buddies

We continue our partnership with Ames Community Preschool Center by providing small group reading and literacy fun with volunteers twice a week during the school year. Eighteen four-year-olds worked with four amazing volunteers: reading, singing, counting, dancing, and STEM!

### Read to Succeed

United Way of Story County supports the Food Bank of Iowa Backpack Program that provides backpacks of

food to feed disadvantaged elementary-age children over the weekend and during school breaks. RRSC contributes to this program by giving personally selected gift books to tuck in backpacks three times a year, typically before holidays and spring and summer breaks. In the 2016-17 school year, 305 elementary school students from six Story County school districts received books.

### StoryPals

StoryPals expanded to our third preschool site in the 2016-17 school year! Colo-NESCO preschoolers joined Ames and Nevada preschoolers in dialogic reading with volunteers. 64 three and four-year-olds participated, worked with volunteer mentors once or twice a week, and received a new book at the end of the program celebration.

## Ongoing

### Food Pantries

RRSC continues our passion for putting books in the hands of children by providing gently-used books at food pantries in Ames, Gilbert, Story City, Slater, Nevada, and Huxley. These books become Forever Books for children who benefit from food pantries.

### Little Free Libraries

Thirty RRSC Little Free Libraries are located throughout Story County. These libraries are filled with children's books for families to enjoy. New libraries in 2016 were installed at Patio Holmes Park and Greenbriar Park in Ames and at First Presbyterian Church in Maxwell.

### Raising a Reader

Eighteen babies and eighteen parents participated this past year in our parent education/empowerment class Raising a Reader. Partnering with People Place, moms and dads learned communication tools, songs, games, and activities that they can do at home to increase their child's brain development during the first three years of life.



**"I loved the newsletters! They provided good information on what my daughter was doing which helped spark questions for me to ask her."**



Continued on Page 6

### Reach Out and Read

Once again, approximately 10,000 books were handed out at well-child check-ups at McFarland Clinics, Story County Medical Clinics, the WIC Clinic, and Primary Health Care, Inc. for babies, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers throughout the county. Pediatricians use the books in their check-ups to check development and then prescribe reading at home to the children and their families.

### Reading Corners

This unique RRSC program provides literacy-rich areas in public reception rooms to encourage families to enjoy books together while they wait. RRSC created a Reading Corners toolkit to encourage quality and consistency. New reading corners were installed this summer thanks to a 2016 Golf Fore Kids Grant in Nevada, Zearing, and Maxwell at their Story County Medical Clinics. A new reading corner will be installed in the ER at Mary Greeley Medical Center this fall.

### Small Talk Story County

Partnering with Iowa State University and Ames Public Library, STSC is a series of free classes filled with learning, support, and valuable research focused on giving parents the tools they need to create an enriching language environment for their child (0-30 months) and learn about how to help their baby's brain grow. A healthy snack or meal and childcare are provided, and babies receive a free book after each session. 73 babies received their M.B.A. (My Baby's Awesome) degree in 2016-17

### StoryTime at Eastwood

Twice a month, children who live at Eastwood Apts., a low-income housing complex in Ames, gather after school to enjoy stories, poems, songs, and movement activities. Between 8 and 20 children attend each StoryTime and many of the children also participate in other RRSC programs.

### Tot Time at Eastwood

Families with children under three participate in this program at Eastwood Apts. In Ames. This program is held three times a month and engages parents and caregivers in games, songs, and activities to recreate at home with their child. New board books are given to the children each session

### Special Events

#### Bethesda Food Pantry Book Give-Away

Each fall, families who receive their Thanksgiving or Christmas food basket from the Bethesda Food Pantry also receive a free new children's book from RRSC for each child in their household. 687 books were given away at the 2016 give-aways

#### Northwood Literacy Night

Each winter, RRSC gives out new preschool-appropriate books at Northwood Preschool's Literacy Night. 295 books were given out in 2017

#### Read Across Story County

This annual event is provided as a volunteer option each September during the United Way Day of Caring. Community volunteers visit participating schools. The adults read books with groups of children and share why reading is important to them.

It supports the UWSC focus area of Education and raises awareness of the need to start early to develop literate citizens for our society. The 2016 Day of Caring was Friday, September 7, 2016 and 28 volunteers from the Center for Creative Justice, Fox Engineering, ISU Office of the Vice President for Research, ISU Foundation, and ISU College of Liberal Arts and Sciences participated.

#### Step Into Storybooks (Ames and Eastern Story County)

Each spring, RRSC partners with the Ames Public Library, Ames Morning Rotary, Nevada Kiwanis, Nevada Community School District, and many volunteers to provide fun literacy-rich experiences to inspire families to use reading and related activities at home with their babies, toddlers, and preschoolers.

These early relationships and experiences influence children's brain development. Over 2000 attended the Ames event at the Ames Public Library and 231 attended the Eastern Story County event at Central Elementary School in Nevada.

Over 150 volunteers made the two events possible! Books were given out at both events and were sponsored by Ames Morning Rotary in Ames and Burke Corporation in Nevada.

