

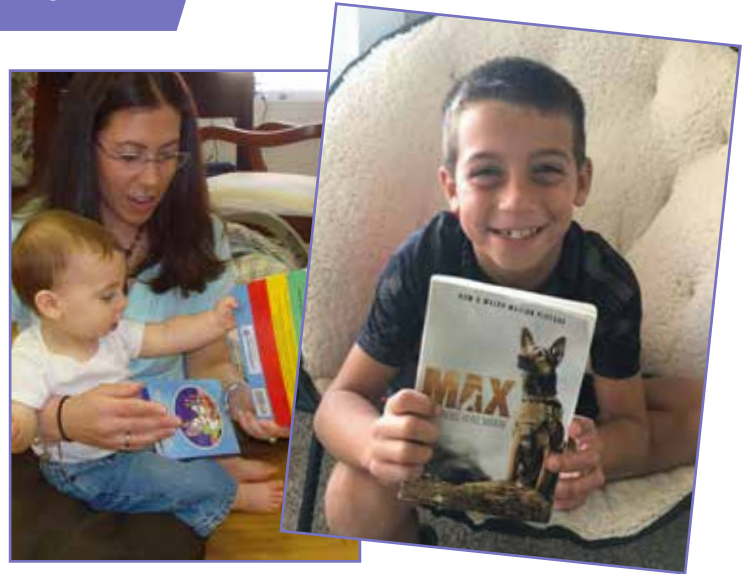
# Empowering parents to *nurture early literacy*



**“All four of our parents were teachers, so we understood the importance of reading with children starting at young ages. What I didn’t know 8 years ago was that we were creating memories, traditions and good habits with Cody.**

**“We now have two boys who both love reading. We are thankful for how Raising Readers gives books and supports our community.”**

*—Andy & Lindsey Long*



At 6-months, Cody received a book from Raising Readers in Story County (left). Cody is now in third grade (right) and enjoys reading to learn and for pleasure.

## ***Celebrating 10 Years of Reach Out and Read in Story County***

In 2003 three forces came together to launch Reach Out and Read. Dr. Alexander returned to Ames as a pediatrician with a high regard for the program. Ames Morning Rotary Club offered to supply pediatricians at McFarland Clinic with books to give at 6-month checkups. The community early literacy coalition that would become Raising Readers in Story County (RRSC) assumed an ongoing leadership role for the program.

In 2006 RRSC and McFarland Clinic became official Reach Out and Read providers. We followed the national model. Doctors began giving books at all 8 checkups from 6 months to 5 years and told families to read at home. Ames Morning Rotary continued to provide all the 6-month books. RRSC recruited additional sponsors to fund other levels. RRSC also created Reading Corners in waiting rooms of clinics and agencies in Story County.

Unique aspects of our program:

1. RRSC provides books to all the participating Story County doctors who do well-child checkups.
2. Community donors pay for the books.
3. For each age level, RRSC selects specific high quality books that doctors use to observe the children’s development.
4. RRSC created materials to give out at the 2-month checkup to encourage talking and reading to infants when their brains are adding over 700 new synapses a second.



# Championing Grade Level Reading

## RRSC Outreach in Story County

*RRSC serves all Story County communities. Our Reach Out and Read program provides about 10,000 books a year to families who bring children to checkups at medical clinics, including Primary Health Care, and MICA's WIC Clinic. We maintain 21 Reading Corners and 24 Little Free Libraries in the county.*



Nevada has welcomed a number of RRSC programs. Central Elementary School has a successful StoryPals program for preschoolers. Nevada hosted an Eastern Story County Step into Storybooks event for two years.

RRSC's Read to Succeed program provides free books three times a year to Nevada, Ballard and Gilbert students in UWSC's BackPack food program. Roland-Story, Colo-Nesco, Gilbert, Ballard and Nevada all hosted community readers as part of RRSC's annual Read Across Story County event on UWSC Day of Caring.



RRSC continues to expand programming outside of Ames. This summer, RRSC brought Super K, our transition to kindergarten program, to Nevada. Nine 5-year-olds attended to prepare for kindergarten this fall. Gilbert and Nevada students took part in K-3 Reading Buddies this summer at various Ames sites.



## K-3 Reading Buddies

- 80 students ages 5-9
- 48 volunteers
- Ames

The K-3 Reading Buddies program focused on avoiding the "summer slide" by maintaining or improving students' reading skills over summer break. Forty-eight trained volunteers worked with 80 children at 10 conveniently located sites in Ames.

Students and their tutors read together, created projects, wrote sentences, letters, and even stories. They enjoyed a fun learning environment twice a week during six weeks in July and August.

A Story County Community Foundation grant funded a lending library of books. After each session, children borrowed books to take home in purple RRSC bags, along with reading logs to record their daily reading.

At the end of the program, every student who did the pre- and post-tests had maintained or increased his or her reading level. A celebration was held at Reiman Gardens.

*These two part-time staff coordinate RRSC family literacy programs and children's services.*



Judy Dahlke: StoryTime, Coffee & Chat, Raising a Reader, Super K & ACPC Reading Buddies



Lisa Reeves: K-3 Reading Buddies, Harrison Barnes Reading Academy, Books in the Home, & StoryPals.



# Getting Ready for School

## RRSC Super K

- 30 children age 5
- 2 volunteers
- Ames and Nevada

Retired kindergarten teachers created this innovative program for children who had not attended preschool or who needed a little more preparation for school. Super K exposes students to many of the routines and activities they will experience in kindergarten. Nine students in Nevada and 21 students in Ames learned how to become super friends, super listeners, super organizers, and super problem solvers as they became familiar with the backpack routine, lunch tray procedures, opening milk cartons, and saying “goodbye” to families at the door. Each student received a gift backpack, school supplies, daily snacks, a RRSC purple cinch bag to carry lending library books each day, and a “Ready for Kindergarten” book. Parents received regular newsletters. At the end of the two-week program, the Super Ks ‘graduated’ with a better understanding of what kindergarten would be like.



## Preschool Reading Buddies

- 24 children ages 4 & 5
- 4 volunteers
- Ames

RRSC partners with Ames Community Preschool Center (ACPC) and the ISU School of Education to provide fun literacy activities each school year for 4- and 5-year-olds. The children meet individually or in pairs with volunteers for 20 minutes twice a week to read and do activities such as puzzles, memory games, and letter identification.

One of the ACPC Lead Teachers sums it up this way: “Personal attention from Raising Readers has helped strengthen our preschoolers’ kindergarten readiness skills greatly! They leave ACPC proud and confident. Parents commented on their development of skills and appreciated all the extra activities we provided.”

## Preschool StoryPals

- RRSC StoryPals
- 49 children ages 3 and 4
- 15 volunteers
- Ames and Nevada



Six volunteers in Nevada worked with 37 preschoolers at Central Elementary over the school year for a total of 142 volunteer hours. Nevada children who participated in 2014-15 saw measurable benefits from this research-based dialogic reading program, with almost every child testing close to, at proficiency, or higher on their Kindergarten FAST tests. In Ames 9 volunteers worked with twelve 3-year-olds at Northwood Preschool for a total of 204 volunteer hours this past spring. RRSC will provide StoryPals to another community this fall by serving preschool children at Colo-NESCO Elementary School in Zearing.

**“Thank you so much! This program definitely helped my kindergartener!!”**



Ames Super K



Nevada Super K

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

# RRSC is Making a Difference

This past year RRSC directly served over 20,000 children and adults with our programs and books. In the 14 years since 2003, the total number served is 224,880, with some people duplicated from year to year.

Families are reading more, according to surveys completed by 120 parents at McFarland Clinic in Nevada. 100% said their doctor thought it was very important to read daily with their child in the first five years. 90% said they read aloud with their child once a day or most days. 88% said they typically spend 20-30 minutes a day reading together. 100% knew about Raising Readers in Story County.



The percent of children entering Ames kindergarten demonstrating basic literacy skills on the FAST assessment increased from 66% in 2014 to 78.36% in 2015.

All students who participated in summer Reading Buddies and did the pre- and post-tests maintained or increased their reading levels. Families said they read more at home

with RRSC Lending Library books.

Almost all of the 29 students participating in StoryPals in Nevada in the 2014-15 school year tested close to or above proficient on the FAST literacy assessment when they entered kindergarten.

## Awards

Raising Readers in Story County received the first-ever Iowa Literacy Award from the Iowa Center for the Book for our outstanding contributions to increasing literacy in Iowa. The award was sponsored by the Library of Congress and the State Library of Iowa.

The national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading honored Ames Reads with a 2015 Pacesetter Award. RRSC programs are improving children's readiness for school and providing reading tutoring outside of school.

## Volunteers

Welcome to our new Volunteer Coordinator, Sue Seaton. As past president of the RRSC board, Sue

has a passion for early literacy, a deep understanding of RRSC programs, and is uniquely qualified to match volunteers with their interests and availability. Email Sue at [volunteer@raising-readers.org](mailto:volunteer@raising-readers.org) or call the RRSC office at 515-520-8686. View volunteer opportunities online at [www.raising-readers.org](http://www.raising-readers.org).

Thank you to Marcia Thompson who faithfully recorded the hours of RRSC volunteers for five years! Marcia tracked our progress from 4,000 volunteer hours to over 7,000 hours in 2015.

Thank you to three dedicated members of the RRSC Board of Directors who have retired! Linda Carver, Judy Dahlke, and Connie Dunham guided RRSC with passion and common sense and gave untold hours of service.

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