

Book Report from The BookStart Fund

Newsletter Number Seven, December 2016

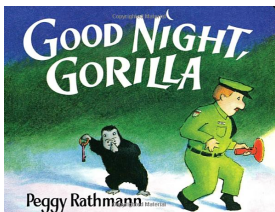
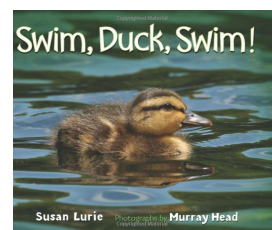
BookStart Partners Now Include Homeless Shelters

Great news! Vincent Village and Charis House have been added to our group of partner agencies delivering brand new board books to their client families with very young children. We will soon add Just Neighbors as the third agency serving homeless families. This will bring our total to eight agencies and means that more than 700 families in Allen County with children birth through age three will be receiving books. Many of these families have had no children's books at all.

The most important aspect of the BookStart program is that it makes books available to the parents of very young children at just the right time in their children's lives. Children's brains are more able to absorb new sounds and words and ideas at ages zero to three than at any other time. Reading to these children is critically important to their development.

The BookStart program is truly exciting because it is filling a very real un-met need in our community. Our partner agencies do not have funding to buy books for the families they serve. Jana Clark, Coordinator of the Bright Steps Early Childhood Initiative, Allen Superior Family Relations Division, wrote that the families look forward to the book they receive at the end of each session. Many have expressed excitement because they will get to share a new book with their children whether they are reading the words written on each page or making up their own stories to match the pictures. Jana also shared these anecdotes:

An older brother to one of my infants told me how much he loved the book they had picked the week before. He had been reading it to his little sister every day. It was the Swim Duck Swim book. He was able to tell me what happened in the story and he said he really liked the cute duck pictures.



A mom asked if we had any more copies of Good Night Gorilla because her girls loved it so much and wanted to read it so often that evidently it had gotten dirty and the girls decided to give it a "bath" to clean it up. Obviously, books and water do not mix!

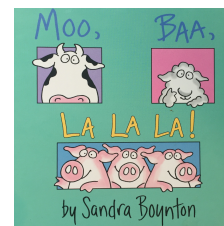
Why we look for diversity in the books we buy...

Children need to identify with the characters in their books. Carla Hayden, the new Librarian of Congress and the first woman and first African-American to be in that position, said, "What's so important about kids' books—they can be windows to introduce them to the world, but they also need to see a reflection. They should be a window and a mirror." When asked her childhood memories of books, she described her thrill when she was given a book about a little girl who "looked like me."

Actor, comedian and writer Aasif Mandvi, said in a New York Times Magazine article that he hoped to move the conversation about roles for minorities to "where you have brown characters who actually are the source of the story rather than just adjacent brown people in a predominantly white world."

These two people have beautifully expressed one of our book selection criteria. And it's not just that books showing minority children are important for minority children! Beyond the need for children to see central characters who look like them in some of their books, ALL children need to see a variety of ethnicities represented. ALL children need to see people who DON'T look like them front and center sometimes, as well as seeing themselves. How else can we raise children who do not turn their backs on others?

It is challenging to find books that match this criteria. In our search for appropriate books to buy for the BookStart program, we still see many otherwise delightful books that are either all white or set "in a predominately white world." We rarely see the reverse. Often we fall back on books with anthropomorphized animals, which avoids the problem in a fun way. The mouse family in *Goodnight Moon*, all the characters in Sandra Boynton's hilarious series of raps and rhymes, including *Moo*, *Baa*, *La La La!*, and the scared baby owls waiting for mommy in *Owl Babies* are clearly human in their feelings and actions. The human child lucky enough to be hearing it in the loving circle of a parent's lap understands this with no explanation needed.



BookStart Partner Agencies

Healthy Families, SCAN

Read & Rise, Fort Wayne Urban League

Bright Steps, Allen Co Superior Court

Early Head Start Home Visits, Bright Point

Healthier Moms & Babies

Charis House, Rescue Mission

Vincent Village

Just Neighbors

BookStart Fund 2016 Donors

(Donations after December 8th will be listed in the next Book Report)

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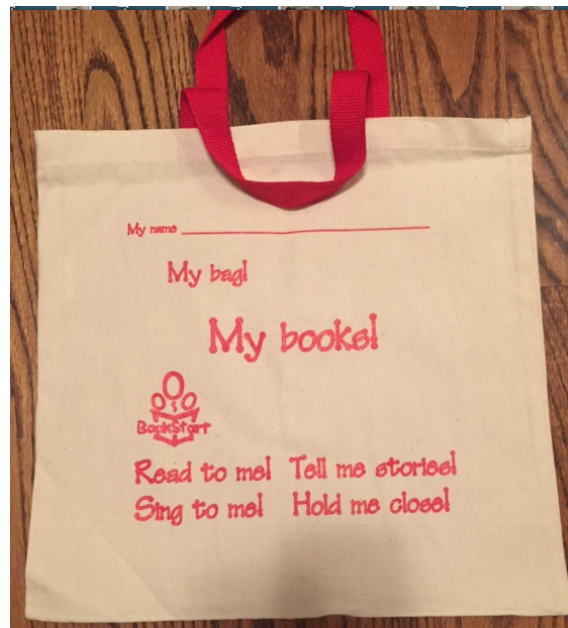
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Vaun Smith
Todd & Janet Stephenson
David & Nancy Stewart
Bob & Irene Walters
Julie Waterfield
Dana Wichern
Terence Wogan
Frank & Judy Wright*

Book Bags For Children in Shelters

Thanks to our Book Bag Angels, Jeanne & Steve Lewis and Larry Lee, we now have canvas book bags for the children at the homeless shelters who will receive new books from the BookStart Fund!

A place for the child's name on a bag he or she can keep—what a special treat for these children with so little!



*The BookStart Fund
4101 W Hamilton Rd
Fort Wayne IN 46814*

How To Help

Mail a check payable to the Community
Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne
(write BookStart on the memo line) to:

Community Foundation
555 East Wayne Street
Fort Wayne IN 46802

Or go to cfgfw.org and donate online.
Write "BookStart" as the special fund.

Donations are used only for books!

Questions?

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Dana Wichern: 260-615-6417

How do you like our new logo?

(Thanks, Will Clark!)

