

# *The Read To Me Program, Inc. Newsletter*



**Spring 2006**

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## ***WORDS FROM THE DIRECTOR, SUSAN STRAUB***

This has been an astonishing year for us. Here's a surprisingly concise listing of our highlights. We've:

- become independent as The READ TO ME Program, Inc.,
- produced and screened a new baby video, *Reading With Babies (Leyendo Con Bebés)*,
- trained superb colleagues in the Harlem Children's Zone,
- collaborated with Reach Out and Read programs in The Bronx, NYC, and their national headquarters in Boston,
- joined our BPL colleagues in an enthusiastic & energetic literacy campaign, Brooklyn Reads To Babies,
- received some breathtaking recognition (from Child Care, Inc and CINE) and
- presented our work at local, state and national conferences on early childhood education, family literacy and adult basic education.

More elaborate information about each of these exciting events exists on our website.

But the happiest part is the satisfaction of achieving our goal: to get more books into the lives of more babies and their families.

Through our website ([www.readtomeprogram.org](http://www.readtomeprogram.org)) enthusiastic colleagues from all across the States have used our materials in their own programs. Three persuasive adaptations include 1- CIRCLE at the U of Texas-Houston using Reading With Babies to support low income/teenage moms in building their parenting skills and preventing child neglect; 2- Reach Out and Read using RWB as part of their training program for health care providers; and 3- UVA Under Fives Study Center's program to help prepare male prisoners learn a way to reconnect with their young children as they begin a transitional year before moving back home from jail. We have brief reports from CIRCLE and the Under 5s, and a wonderful report from a new mom at her local pregnancy center.

READ TO ME has a small and quite splendid team. Here we are, in a giddy photograph taken at the Child Care, Inc. Award Luncheon in October 2005.



Photo by Peter Straub

[from left: Deanna, Kristen, Diane, Susan & Kathy]

- Deanna Pacelli, assistant extraordinaire, yogi and star of a well-received one woman show *There Goes The Neighborhood*;
- Kristen Lynch, associate leader, mother of 2 1/2 year old Lucina, and Urban Gypsy co-producer with her husband Murat Ozcan of Monica Haim's documentary *Awake Zion*;
- Diane Whitaker Brown, LYFE social worker, READ TO ME leader and one of life's treasures; and
- Kathy Kinsner, co-producer for the *Reading With Babies* video, now Director of Curriculum Development for Road to Success.

Others who have made this a most creative year include:

- Andy Reichsman and Kate Purdie (Ames Hill Production) co-film directors and editors;
- Jane LeCroy, READ TO ME leader and poet of *TRANSMITTING* fame;
- Michael Fusco, art designer of *Reading With Babies* ([www.michaelfuscodesign.com](http://www.michaelfuscodesign.com)); and
- KJ Dell'Antonia, co-author of our book, *Reading With Babies, Toddlers and Twos*.

The acknowledgments section offers a more complete list of thank-yous to our many supporters and colleagues. Let us know about your new programs. We love the company.

Fondly,  
Susan

### ***EXCITING NEW ARRIVALS & CONNECTIONS***

- *Reading With Babies (Leyendo Con Bebés)* is born!

The DVD, VHS (English) & VHS (Spanish) arrived in April 2005 and we couldn't be more excited! It was a long process but well worth the time and effort. Here is a picture from our April 05 screening party for all the Families, Babies and Helpers who participated in the filming at B&N Lincoln Square.



[video star Austin with a red purse and his family]

We never could have anticipated the tremendous response and interest this video generated in its first year! On top of receiving the **CINE Golden Eagle** award and a glowing review from **The School Library Journal**, *Reading With Babies*, has entertained and encouraged everyone who sees the babies reading.

- **Reading To Babies, Toddlers & Twos** by Susan Straub and K.J. Dell'Antonia

This was the year of giving birth! Not only does co-author K.J. expect her third baby this Spring, but she and Susan welcome the arrival of their book on reading to babies April 26th!

Keep an eye out for this fun guide on what, when and how to read to your children from birth to three.

To learn more or to purchase a copy go to: [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

- **The Harlem Children's Zone** and Read To Me Trainings:

The incredible Harlem Children's Zone chose to train their staff in the 8-part Read To Me workshop model. In this past year, our Associate, Kristen Lynch, ran the various training programs with the help of Diane Whitaker Brown. HCZ came up with some creative ways of using our program to further educate their child-care and outreach workers and instructors! Child-Care workers learned the model to encourage new approaches to reading to the children under their care. Outreach workers found the model flexible enough to create a version they could bring into their home visits. Instructors went on to train others and influence parents. There are amazing things going on at HCZ to get children and families reading!

To find out more visit: [www.hcz.org](http://www.hcz.org)

- **Brooklyn Public Library's** Brooklyn Reads To Babies:

This year, Brooklyn Public Library launched an exciting family literacy campaign called *Brooklyn Reads To Babies!* The campaign focuses on the crucial importance of reading to children in their first few years of life when we can give them the confidence and desire to read for the rest of their lives. As part of the campaign, we screened *Reading With Babies*. This video documents all sorts of situations one can encounter when reading to little ones from tears to cuddles & squeals of laughter. It reminds us that there is no wrong way to start reading. Now you can borrow a copy of *Reading With Babies (Leyendo Con Bebés)* at many local branches of the Brooklyn Public Library.

To find out more visit: [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/first5years/read/baby/](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/first5years/read/baby/)

- **Reach Out and Read:**

ROR promotes reading to children from 6 months to 5 years by making books and advice available at pediatric well baby visits. When *Reading With Babies (Leyendo Con Bebés)* made its debut, ROR starting purchasing copies to play in their waiting rooms! Additionally, ROR included some footage of our parents and guardians reading to their children in one of their staff training videos.

To find out more visit: [www.reachoutandread.org/](http://www.reachoutandread.org/)

### **LETTERS FROM CURRENT READ TO ME PROGRAMS**

- Edited report from Cathy Guttentag at U of T Pediatrics, she is using Reading With Babies to aid in her work in preventing child neglect.

Dear Ms. Straub,

I recently had the opportunity to see your new Reading With Babies videotape, and it is wonderful! I am a researcher (and child psychologist) working under developmental psychologist Dr. Susan Landry at the University of Texas - Houston. We have a number of grant-funded research studies in progress in the areas of early literacy development, quality preschool education, and parenting interventions for low SES moms. One of our studies, called Preventing Child Neglect in High Risk Mothers, is a multi-

site collaborative study among 4 universities (U.T., Notre Dame, U. Kansas, and Georgetown) and has a specific component related to early literacy and encouraging moms to read books with their babies. We have nearly 300 families enrolled in this study across the 4 sites and will continue to be working with them during their babies' first 3 years of life. This is fairly intensive program where trained facilitators conduct weekly home visits and work with each mom and infant one-on-one to build her parenting skills in a number of areas. We have been searching for a good video that demonstrates how to look at books with babies that is available in both English and Spanish, so I was excited to see your Reading with Babies video.

Sincerely,

Cathy Guttentag, Ph.D.

Developmental Pediatrics, University of Texas

Cathy.Guttentag@uth.tmc.edu

Follow-up (slightly edited) report from Cathy stated:

"Our coaches using your video continue to give universally positive feedback about how the sessions go, and how moms are willing to practice reading with their babies with more enthusiasm after seeing the video, even among moms who had previously told their coaches that their babies did not like books or show an interest in them. Across all 4 of our intervention sites, the feedback is similarly positive."

- Edited report from Randi Bluestein on a Read To Me Workshop in Baltimore.

Dear Susan,

The workshop was so amazing! I had a great time with the moms and Allie and Bryce (ed.note: Randi's 8 month twins) were such little stars! There were 6 moms there- 3 pregnant and 3 with babies. I shared with them my experience and joy through sharing who, what, when, how and why your babies will love books and being read to. I modeled reading to Allie and Bryce and you could see how connected they were to me and the story. Even the other babies in the room were engaged!! I had the moms pick out their own book to take home and gave out some folders complete with rhymes and library applications. They had some questions and there was a lot of talking, sharing and laughing. One mom wanted to know if her baby would be able to read faster because of being read to...

I stressed some reading don'ts. You don't need a lot of time, you don't need to be a great reader (your baby will not know the difference) and you don't need a lot of books (babies love repetition). There were a few moms that were interested in continuing with your program. The coordinator of the moms group is going to ask her director if we could hold the program at the pregnancy center. Overall it felt so good to share with the other moms what I believe in so much!

Randi Bluestein

randibeno@aol.com

- Edited report from Judith Bauerle, Under Fives Study Center, UVA

I want to let you know about the prison work. A new volunteer, Janet van der Linde, a 20-year teacher turned nurse, joined me in our most recent prison group. It is seven guys who are all within one year of release. They are so enthusiastic and interactive about the program and you should see the books they produce! And they love sending home books! One man hadn't talked with his wife for two years, but when he started sending books to his three kids, she sent him a note. Wasn't a very friendly one, but it was contact and he told me (more than once), Read To Me did this!

Towards the final session I showed the guys the video, after obtaining permission from the prison!

They were spellbound! There was barely a sound of breathing in the room. Although only one has a very young child, 2 years old, they could see what we've been talking about "in person". The video is especially good because of the daddies in it.

I asked them if they thought I should show it earlier with the next group and they suggested the first session would be best.

We'll start with a new group in a couple of weeks, and I hope we don't cause a riot- seems many of the guys in the "transition" building (where this group lives) want to participate since they've heard about RTM from the current bunch. And the director of treatment programs has decided to also open it up to the rest of the population which I think includes ~ 900 people. That's it for now. Thanks again for Read To Me.

Love,

Judy Bauerle

[www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/underfives/](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/underfives/)

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My Book Group

NYPL: Rebecca Brown & Carol Smalls

Reach Out and Read National: Ron Bailey & Ellen Berlin

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Jennifer Stark

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Zero To Three: Claire Lerner, Amy Dombro & Emily Fenichel

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Vera B. Williams

***HOW YOU CAN HELP***

The Read To Me Program, Inc. can no longer accept tax-deductible donations although we can connect a donor with one of our non-profit partners!

We can accept:

- Gently used books! We often need books to use or giveaway when holding our workshop sessions. We kindly ask you to send books that are appropriate for ages 0-3 years. Please mail them to the address below.
- Volunteers! We often need help here and there with transporting, shipping, light office work, etc. We are very friendly and can promise free coffee and conversation as compensation! If you have some time and are looking to help put books in the hands of babies then contact: Deanna Pacelli (212) 721-6211 or [deanna@readtomeprogram.org](mailto:deanna@readtomeprogram.org)
- Help get a Read To Me Program started! We offer starter kits for anyone wishing to begin a program on their own. They are \$300 and include: a *Read To Me Video/Guide*, a DVD of *Reading With Babies*, a bookbag, art & photo supplies, picture & resource books. One could be purchased as a donation to a beginning program. Help get an idea off the ground!

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