



# Massachusetts Coalition Newsletter

Reach Out and Read Massachusetts Coalition ■ 56 Roland Street ■ Suite 100D  
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Spring/Summer 2008

A Coalition of 220 ROR Clinical Locations

## Reflections from the Road

After lengthy exposure to almost anything, we tend to develop an immunity to what is special or compelling about it. But then a new bird arrives at the feeder, or our daughter or niece suddenly plays Brahms rather than fingering exercises, or the sun appears after a long string of gray days, and our perspective changes. We are reminded not only of the extraordinary in the ordinary, but we maybe see or hear something brand new.

I had such a gift given to me during the filming of our new ROR-MA Training DVD this spring. I observed doctor after doctor in simulated well-child exams discussing with parents the importance of books and reading, noting the connection between language acquisition and reading, and how important it is to create this "love of books" which is the heart and soul of ROR.

The expertise and genuine interest each provider exuded put me back in touch with why all of us connected to ROR do what we do. And our ROR health care providers do it every day with a unique combination of love and efficiency, humor and kindness, and incredible skill and joy.

They were filmed speaking with their own patients, and I saw the strength of those relationships – the very reason we know parents listen to the advice they're given. Their doctors care, and they care deeply. It was in abundant evidence as Dr. Roland Tang gently kissed the top of tiny Glorie's head when he walked into the exam room; as Dr.

## THANK YOU, ROR TRAINING VIDEO PARTICIPANTS!

Alexy Arauz, MD

Patricia Prince, MD

Marilyn Augustyn, MD

Nicole Prudent, MD

Carolyn Brookhart, MD

Mary Ellen Stolecki, NP

Diego Castellanos,  
Interpreter

Roland Tang, MD

Polly Cornblath

Suki Tepperberg, MD

Eileen Costello, MD

The entire team at

Sean Palfrey, MD

Vida Health

Communications, Inc.

Suki Tepperberg shared smiles right along with reassurances that Nyla was interested in Dad sharing that book with her; and as Dr. Eileen Costello so expertly calmed, re-directed and then engaged the attention of Michael, an autistic child, as Mom sat nearby, surprised. "I thought he wouldn't sit for that long with a book," Mom said, happy to have a new way to engage him herself now.

Every one of the providers involved in this project during those four days of filming not only shone their light, they shone a light on the work ROR does and does in a very profound and personal way. I feel positively luminescent. Thank you all.

– Gretchen Hunsberger  
ROR-MA Programs Director

## Fall River: ROR's First Bookend City



Back Row, L to R: Walter Rok, MD; Julien Ginsberg-Peltz, MD; Stanley Spevack, MD; Barry Zuckerman, MD (CEO, Reach Out and Read); State Rep. Pat Haddad; Eduardo Leonardo, MD. Front Row, L to R: Mayor Robert Correia; Jeannine Audet, MD; Linda Medeiros.

On February 15, Fall River officially became the first Reach Out and Read Bookend City, and pediatricians, community leaders, and elected officials from the Southcoast region gathered to honor the city's significant achievement. ROR launched the Bookend City Initiative this year to encourage regional leaders, local officials, and pediatric care providers to work together to promote early literacy in their community.

Mayor Robert Correia was presented with an engraved set of Bookend City bookends, and special certificates of recognition were presented to all seven medical practices in Fall River that have implemented ROR. Mayor Correia also visited Pediatric Associates of Fall River to witness the work of Reach Out and Read in action. As a former educator,

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## From the ROR-MA Medical Director...

Recently published research gives us new back-up for promoting reading aloud to young children. This time research shows us what parents are *not* currently doing.



In a recently published article (Arch Ped Adol Med 162 (5): 411-417, 2008), Mendelsohn and colleagues reported on a cross-sectional analysis of 154 mother-infant dyads (average age of infants 6.6 months) participating in a long-term study related to early child development. They measured mother-infant verbal interaction associated with media exposure and maternal co-viewing. In addition (and not yet published), they measured parent-child reading activities using the STIMQ-READ (an interviewer administered scale that assesses the frequency of reading activities): children's books read to the child and interactions around reading, and they also measured maternal depression symptoms. These last two measures have not yet been fully analyzed (so stay tuned), but they did find very compelling results relative to media exposure.

Of 154 low SES status mothers, 149 (99%) reported their infants had daily media exposure, with median exposure time of 120 minutes in a 24 hour period. Among these exposures, mother-infant interactions were reported in 24% of them. These interactions were reported most frequently when co-viewing educational, young child-oriented media (43% of the programs) as opposed to fewer interactions during school-aged/adult-oriented programs (15%) or non educational young-child oriented programs (21%).

For me, there are two take-home messages from this study:

- On average, by 6 months of age, infants are exposed to 120 minutes of media per day, and;
- Perhaps more importantly, even during programs that are co-viewed and educational, only 63% of the time is an important human being (their mother), interacting with them.

Decades of research on early child development have shown that relationship is of utmost importance to optimal development. It is through relationships that language, cognition, and motor development thrive. Without those critical human connections, exposures are merely that – exposures. What children desperately need are the connections that happen when someone speaks to them, looks them in the eye, holds them, cuddles them – in other words, shares moments together with them.

Reach Out and Read begins at 6 months – perhaps we are already too late? Yet no matter the age, let's encourage more of our families to go to the library.

– Marilyn Augustyn, MD  
ROR-MA Medical Director

## Welcome to ROR!

Foley Family Practice, P.C., Athol  
Child Health Associates, P.C., Auburn  
Jordan Family Practice, Bourne  
North Shore Pediatrics, P.C., Danvers  
Dr Nora E. Hanke, Easthampton  
Eduardo Leonardo, MD, Inc., Fall River  
Family Practice Associates, Leominster  
Ludlow Pediatrics, Ludlow  
Horizon Pediatrics, North Dartmouth  
Shrewsbury Family Practice, Shrewsbury  
Family Medicine at Ball Square, Somerville  
South Deerfield Family Practice, South Deerfield  
Pediatric Care Associates, Springfield  
Taunton School Based Health Centers, Taunton  
West Brookfield Family Practice, West Brookfield  
A. L. Morales, West Springfield  
Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, Wilbraham  
Grove Family Medicine Associates, Worcester  
UMass Memorial Pediatric Primary Care, Worcester

## ROR-MA Training Video Project

### What is the ROR-MA Training Video Project?

A collaboration of specialists: Vida Health Communications, Inc., an award-winning Cambridge-based company specializing in production and distribution of evidence-based educational media for clinical, patient, and lay audiences; ROR-MA, led by Medical Director Dr. Marilyn Augustyn; ten Massachusetts providers willing to model ROR best practices while the cameras roll; and the many families who volunteered to be filmed, and filmed, and sometimes filmed again!

### What is the goal?

To develop better training materials: New power point slides with embedded teaching “vignettes” (live footage of ROR in the exam room) covering the standard well-child visits, the pre-K visit, visits with a family and an interpreter, etc., to serve as guidance for both new and experienced ROR providers.

### Why?

Residents and providers new to ROR often wonder how best to incorporate the ROR intervention into standard well-child exams. Practiced ROR providers sometimes forget what anticipatory guidance they might give at a particular visit. And everyone benefits from seeing how other providers use the book as part of development surveillance. The vignettes are inspiring, educational, and most importantly, real.

### When will the DVD be ready?

The shoots took place in March and April; May and June are for rough editing; in July there'll be final editing and packaging. We hope to be finished by the end of summer.

**“If you can make it here... you can make it anywhere...”**

## Knowledge Gained in the Big Apple

During my recent Reach Out and Read New York adventure, I visited Claudia Aristy of Bellevue Hospital in midtown Manhattan. With 475,578 clinic visits a year and 94,259 emergency room visits, Bellevue serves the entire spectrum of need in New York City. Only in New York City would one see an urban hospital designed in the same vein as the Guggenheim Museum. Impressive in both visual appeal and diversity of care, Bellevue has a reputation for greatness. Claudia Aristy, parent educator, has certainly achieved that same standard of excellence in her role as ROR Coordinator there.

As ROR-MA programs assistant and as the new ROR coordinator at Boston Medical Center – also a large, urban Reach Out and Read program – I felt I could benefit from observing Claudia’s implementation of the program. After watching her in action with the remarkably diverse families of New York, I came home eager to apply her methods at home and to share some of the techniques that make Bellevue’s program so successful.

Bellevue excels in its implementation of ROR because Claudia participates in all aspects of book distribution. Not only does she select all titles herself, she distributes lists to the physicians that contain the age and gender of the patients they’ll see during a given day. This allows the doctors to choose books for their well-child visits before the day turns hectic.

All books are stored in a central location and then moved by Claudia to exam rooms once the doctors have made their selection. Additionally, ROR bookmarks, with the age appropriate milestones, are inserted into each title by Claudia and her volunteers. This ensures that the ROR message always reaches the parent, even when there’s little time to discuss ROR in a given visit.

Claudia, fluent in Spanish and English, also spends each day in the waiting room interacting with families, acting as a community resource on everything from libraries and ROR to food pantries. This builds true relationships and also makes parents receptive to the mission of ROR

before they even enter the exam room. As a way of empowering families, multilingual posters reminding parents to inquire about ROR hang in every exam room. If the book slips the provider’s mind, it will not slip the parents’ and children’s!

Claudia actively trains, oversees, and mentors a full schedule of volunteers. They play an active role, seeking out children and families to participate in reading aloud activities as they wait for appointments. The volunteers read in a designated reading area that is child-friendly and visible throughout the waiting room. The volunteers even chart which titles are most popular in each age group! Their diversity and strong level of commitment helps create an inclusive team that is as approachable as it is knowledgeable.

Importantly, it is through partnering with local libraries that Claudia is able to expand the literacy message throughout the community. On average, she and her team make six library referrals per day! Packets are given to families based on the language they speak and the neighborhood in which they live. What’s included? A library card application, story hours, read-aloud tips, the benefits of reading aloud, community events at the library, and directions.

For families reluctant to give out home addresses due to questionable immigration status, Claudia contacts local libraries to provide alternative ways of obtaining a library card. Her goal is for no parent or child to feel isolated due to language barriers or immigration status. Accordingly, local libraries are invited to the hospital once a year to assist families in signing up for library cards.

Although each of these elements is vital to making ROR successful in the “Center of the Universe”, it is Claudia’s enthusiasm in approaching children and families that truly helps get information to those who need it most. By working so diligently to spread ROR’s message, Claudia has asserted herself as a champion for the children of NYC.

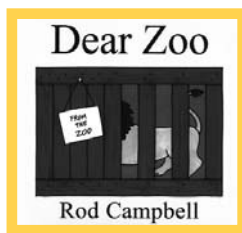
– Nora Murphy  
ROR-MA Programs Assistant and BMC Coordinator

## Reach Out and ‘Roar’

Although many of the books that were beloved by us as children took us into fantastical realms, some simply introduced us to the world around us. This world, of which we are each a part, often expanded our imagination farther than fantasy ever could. The detailed expansiveness of our universe provided us then, as it does now, with endless intrigue.

So why not bring that world closer to the children and families we serve?

At Boston Medical Center, we’re introducing a pilot program designed to connect waiting books to resources available in the community. It will kick off this summer with the book *Dear Zoo*.



Zoo New England has generously agreed to provide us with family passes to both the Franklin Park and Stone Zoos. Our hope is for families to not only read about their world, but to personally explore it! These passes will be given out to families whose children show a particular interest in animals, families who are experiencing isolation, or those who are simply unaware of such resources.

Perhaps you, too, can create waiting room adventures at your practice or clinic!

– Nora Murphy  
ROR-MA Programs Assistant and BMC Coordinator

## ROR Physician Profile

### Nancy Langhans, MD

**D**r. Nancy Langhans, of The Greater New Bedford Community Health Center (GNBCHC), is at the forefront of New Bedford's campaign to become Massachusetts' second Bookend City. In 2005, Dr. Langhans, pediatrician and GNBCHC Medical Director, was the first to bring Reach Out and Read to New Bedford, and she's now encouraging other area physicians to bring ROR to their practices and young patients.

Bookend City status in Massachusetts is conferred on communities of over 40,000 in which all eligible pediatric practices are participating in ROR. It was first awarded to Fall River in January of this year, and now, with ardent support from the Mayor, and with two more ROR programs at private practices on board (and others on the way), another Southcoast city seems clearly in line for the honor.

As a member of the New Bedford Early Literacy Consortium, Dr. Langhans has pioneered other literacy-related programs at the GNBCHC, one of which is the collaboration that brings Foster Grandparents into the clinic to read aloud to children in the waiting room at their George Karousos Pediatric Center.



But Dr. Langhans' advocacy on behalf of children extends far beyond the local community. Long a volunteer with a small medical group from Trinity Church in Boston, she will be returning to Honduras this year for her eighth summer; her office is lined

with photographs of the children she has come to know there. More recently, Nancy returned in May from two weeks in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a team member of Doctors On Call for Service. There she spoke to the medical community on topics such as pediatric ENT emergencies and the office evaluation of behavioral health in childhood.

While she indeed uses some of her days off taking care of administrative tasks at the clinic, Dr. Langhans uses the remainder to devote to her passions – traveling to New York to pursue her love of opera or staying put on her deck, tending to her scores of flower pots. A self-described 'addictive gardener,' Dr. Langhans has definitely put down solid roots in the sandy soil of New Bedford, and the pediatric community is flourishing as a result.

**Thanks to all our Physician Champions  
for your excellent outreach efforts.  
Your word of mouth continues to expand  
ROR into all corners of the Commonwealth.**



#### **Thank You, Weston Families!**

The sixth grade class at the First Parish Church of Weston held a used book drive to benefit the ROR program at Martha Eliot Health Center in Jamaica Plain.

## Odds & Ends

### **Sustainability Awards**

Thank you for submitting your Progress Reports. Most everyone should have their funding no later than May 23. Remember: you have one year to use your funds. If you have not already done so, you must report no later than June 13.

If you selected automatic delivery, please note that if you elected to receive both Spanish and English books, the shipments are one-third Spanish, two-thirds English. If this leaves you with too many Spanish books, please email [nora.murphy@reachoutandread.org](mailto:nora.murphy@reachoutandread.org).

### **Fox 25 summer ZipTrips again benefit ROR!**

Beginning in June, various communities will donate gently used books when Fox 25 broadcasts from their town. And Fox will help get those donations to nearby ROR programs. Thank you Fox 25!

### **ROR provider, Ricardo Lewitus, MD, has published a tri-lingual board book!**

*What Does the Sign Say?*, was written in Portuguese, Spanish, and English in response to the needs of his own patients in Marlborough. Dr. Lewitus also took the photographs and wrote the text. ROR-MA received a special discount so we could offer programs with large populations of Portuguese-speaking patients a much-needed tri-lingual book.

### **Remember to connect with your local library!**

Call the children's librarian at your local library and ask to be sent information for your waiting room and exam rooms! The general response to our Library Initiative so far has been very positive. Keep the momentum going!

## Library Card Initiative

**D**uring National Library week, ROR-MA sent out copies of *Lola at the Library* and *Curious George Goes to the Library*, with the suggestion that ROR providers remind families about the wonderful resources housed behind the doors of their local library. If you have not received these books, please call Nora Murphy (617-455-0657).

"[The books] have been very well-received. It wasn't difficult at all to fit this in. We learn to pick and choose what we need to discuss in the short time we have, and when we hand out *Lola* or *Curious George*, it takes [only] a minute to reinforce reading and the library as a resource," reports Dr. Lynda Young, of Chandler Pediatrics in Worcester. She isn't the only one pleased with our recent initiative. Across the Commonwealth, librarians and ROR coordinators have been in contact with one other, hoping to lay the foundations of collaboration.

Whether agreeing to send information on programming and story hours or creating library card sign up days, Massachusetts children's librarians couldn't be happier to learn about ROR. One of their main goals has always been to reach into the community to build awareness of their resources. In Holyoke, the new children's librarian, Amanda Dale, will now be working toward that end together with Dr. Stephanie Billings of the

- The Bourne children's librarian referred our Southeast Regional Coordinator to her pediatrician in N. Falmouth!
- The Quincy library holds tri-lingual story hours in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English... and has library information printed in Chinese.
- In New Bedford, there are Portuguese and Spanish speaking librarians at branch libraries, and best of all, they have a bookmobile! It is only one of three in the state.
- Talk to your medical assistants and staff about the best way to encourage use of the library. In Holyoke, staff suggested patients would respond more favorably to a display in the waiting room, with balloons and appealing attractions.
- In Charlestown, the children's librarian holds a mom and baby lap-sit hour, filled with lots of rhyming, books, hand-clap games, and sing-a-longs.
- The Chelmsford children's librarian plans to collaborate with the Lowell public library to hold sign-ups and used book donations for area ROR programs.
- In Fitchburg the library budget was cut! They risk closure. Call your legislator and advocate for your local library!

Holyoke Community Health Center, especially reaching out to Holyoke's Hispanic families.

Last month, Gretchen Hunsberger, ROR-MA Programs Director, spoke at the Mass. Library Association's Youth Services Section during their annual meeting, explaining the ROR model, bringing it out of the privacy of the exam room and into larger public awareness. Because ROR is a medical model, as a literacy program it remains somewhat under the radar. As such, she offered to speak to regional library groups in hopes of building stronger relationships between ROR and Massachusetts libraries, offering to share ROR development milestones and to help facilitate connection with local ROR programs.

On Cape Cod, Bass River Pediatrics and the Yarmouth Town Libraries have a longstanding partnership. Says Dr. Marz, "The library is happy to provide to us all the books that they remove from the shelves in the children's department. Each of these provided books will have a summer reading schedule, library hours, and an application for the child to obtain a library card. We will meet again to discuss the impact this creates at the library."

According to Sonia Mee, ROR coordinator at Joseph M. Smith Community Health Centers in Allston and Waltham, "Our providers find that when asking patients if they have library cards, more often than not the answer is no. We are working with the librarians to develop flyers for our exam rooms and have made library card applications available on site."

When we work together, we can make things happen!

## Bookend City

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Mayor Correia was impressed by the ROR model of literacy guidance and proud of the Fall River physicians' combined efforts to combat one of the city's longstanding issues.

We are proud to announce this community-based initiative on behalf of the children of Massachusetts, the aim of which is to prepare the children of an entire community to enter school ready to learn. In Massachusetts, to become a Bookend City, all eligible pediatric practices in a community of 40,000 people or more must participate in ROR.

Dr. Jeannine Audet received special mention for playing an instrumental role in encouraging her fellow pediatricians to bring ROR to their patients. State Rep. Patricia Haddad, Chair of the Joint Committee on Education, also presented a special proclamation to the City of Fall River from Governor Patrick declaring February 15, 2008 "Fall River Bookend City Day." Rep. Haddad is an important supporter of the state funding ROR-MA receives through the Mass. Dept. of Early Education and Care.



**Massachusetts**

**Reach Out and Read**

**56 Roland Street**

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**Boston, MA 02129**

PLEASE PLACE  
POSTAGE  
HERE

## MA legislators advocate for ROR families every day



*Rep. DeLeo reads to children at MGH-Revere Health Center in February.*



*Rep. Dorcena-Forry learns about ROR from Dr. Suki Tepperberg during her visit to Codman Square Health Center in May.*



*Rep. Marie St. Fleur reads aloud in the waiting room at BMC in March.*



**I am a true advocate of the Reach Out and Read program... we appreciate all that is supplied to us for our pediatric patients. Many times this is the only place that they would receive a new book, and one that is for their specific age. I love the posters... they present a positive first impression of your mission... and add color to our waiting room and exam rooms. Your program speaks for itself when we see all of the other outside support from Target, Charlesbridge Publishing, etc.”**

**– Jane Leavens, Operations Manager, Greater Gardner Community Health Center**