



Massachusetts

Massachusetts Coalition Newsletter

Reach Out and Read Massachusetts Coalition ■ 29 Mystic Avenue
Somerville, MA 02145 ■ TEL: 617.629.8042 x234

Fall 2005

A Coalition of 131 ROR Sites and Satellites ■ More than 200,000 new books provided to MA children

Reflections from the Road

Rolling hills. Highways. Vineyard Haven harbor. Back roads. These routes have all led me to similar destinations: communities filled to the brim with families, businesses, neighborhood schools, the bustle of ordinary life. Yet poverty oftentimes resides there, too, midst the bucolic settings, not just within the inner cities. Tourists on Martha's Vineyard may not see it. Yogis and art enthusiasts in western Massachusetts may not focus their awareness on it. Developers may pave right over it. Yet, masked though it often is, health care workers notice it and know it's impact on the health and well being of their patients and the larger community. Daily, they do their jobs, administering care, advice, immunizations, prescriptions ... and increasingly ... books.

Why books? As I drive to sites near and decidedly not-so-near, how can I not wonder: why does Reach Out and Read have 131 programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a state known for its world class colleges and universities? Recognized for its comfortable standard of living? Esteemed for it's wealth of cultural assets?

The answers will obviously vary, but similar to a slice of a holographic image wherein the entire image is reflected in each piece cut out of the whole, we here in Massachusetts are simply a reflection of a national truth: poverty and illiteracy have not been eradicated. And to address this reality, to change family cycles, we must gain quick and early access to families and children in need. Thus, ROR providers do just that, reaching out to kids long before they get to school, even before beginning day care. Babies are being given books! What a wonderful thing.

But it's also a wise thing.

Moving from car to computer, I learn (according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation), that here in Massachusetts 27% of 4th grade students scored below the basic reading level (2003); 12% of our children are living below poverty level and 13.8% are living in high poverty neighborhoods (2000); 6.6 % of teens are high school drop outs (2000). And, variety being the spice of life in our Commonwealth, 19% of our children speak a language other than English at home (2003).

Do I "see" all this from my office, or even as the grass switches to pavement? As I hop off a ferry or step from a rental car? No. But as I move among you during my site

visits, I certainly sense it. And, I'm glad I can help support you in addressing some of the challenges created for kids who live among the statistics, so they might more easily transcend what the numbers portend and live forward into lives of wonder and true potential. Books do open up worlds, and exposure to them at an early age helps kids learn to read on schedule, which has a positive, life-long effect.

Especially given the many hats you already wear, thanks for keeping your ROR programs operating so smoothly. Deep gratitude, too, for being part of the change you wish to see in the world. I admire your sensitivity, work ethic and compassion. Keep up the great work!

*Gretchen Hunsberger
ROR MA Programs Administrator*

NEW ROR SITES: Welcome to Reach Out and Read!

Neponset Community Health Center, Quincy

Pleasant St. Pediatrics, Attleboro

Vineyard Pediatrics, Oak Bluffs

Joseph M. Smith Community Health Center, Waltham



ROR Programs were Impacted by Hurricane Katrina

All of us here at ROR, working (and living) safely and securely in our dry and stable environment, offer our sincere hope that those displaced by Hurricane Katrina will soon find order, peace, and renewal as they rebuild their homes, lives, and hearts. **ROR National is working to contribute to the ROR book replacement effort in affected states and has set aside funds for books for displaced families.**

QUESTIONS?

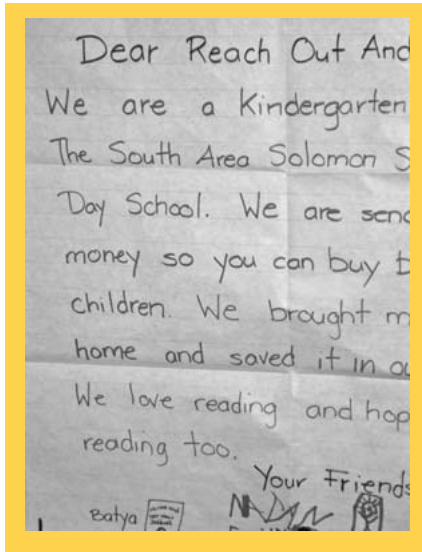
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COMMUNITY LINKS

How are Reach Out and Read programs supported by the children and families of Massachusetts? A few recent examples:

Kindergarteners at the South Area Solomon Schechter Day School, Stoughton, collected \$100.68 (and \$149.40 last year) and donated it to ROR!

Woburn Junior Girl Scouts Kathryn Thifault and Carolyn Filardo ran a successful book drive for ROR-Massachusetts, dropping off dozens of boxes of used children's books.



Even toddlers can help, like 3 yr. old Gabriella Tosone, of Needham, whose friends all brought new books to her birthday party for her to donate to ROR-MA!

And the Rourke family, of Belmont, chooses a different charity to donate to every month, and in July their three teens donated new books to ROR.



Perhaps your ROR site can encourage similar giving, by families in your community.

SHOW & TELL...

ROR program news includes:

...featured in June in the Daily Hampshire Gazette, was the Holyoke Health Center's ROR program, including highlights of a used book drive by area school children. Dr. Jane Cross learned that siblings who come along to a sister or brother's well child check also want books! Sick kids do, too! What to do? Ask for support from your child's elementary school or daycare peers. Not only do you get books, sometimes your program even gets featured in the newspaper....

...a few quick ideas from the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center. No storage space for books? They put them in their filing cabinets!

Want to make a literacy rich waiting area? They put up the alphabet- - right on the walls!

And they have reading tips and other materials to hand out...

Do you have:

- Interesting murals or decals on the walls?
- Innovative book storage ideas?
- Waiting rooms stocked with used books for patients to take home?
- Literacy posters on walls or reading tips in the waiting area?
- Volunteers? (What do they do?)

Take photos and send them in for other ROR programs to see how easy it can be!



...prominent community members reading to children at the Lynn Community Health Center (LCHC). In July, in recognition of First Book-Lynn's recent contribution of 2,500 books to LCHC's ROR program, staff from Mayor Clancy's office, Congressman Tierney's office, Columbia Insurance, and

Operation Bootstrap sat down to share stories with 30 pre-schoolers, as did LCHC Exec. Director, Lori Berry. “We recognize the link between literacy and health,” said Berry, “and we are committed to providing a wide range of services that contribute to a healthy community. We are honored that First Book has chosen to support this vital program.”

Coalition NEWS OF NOTE

Acting as a pilot for the country, Reach Out and Read-Massachusetts is working with Scholastic, Inc. on a new initiative for larger, hospital based ROR programs to raise unrestricted ROR funds.

Why? Despite the Massachusetts coalition’s ability to offer substantial sustainability funding to its ROR programs, the typical ROR program will need additional funding to purchase all the new books it needs. Having additional (and unrestricted) cash also means your program will be able to order more expensive books, books not in the catalog (perhaps in various foreign languages), purchase volunteer smocks, literacy materials, and colorful paper for used book fliers, or even possibly contribute to a ROR coordinator stipend.

Scholastic, our dedicated partner in bringing reasonably priced books to Reach Out and Read sites across the nation, recently launched a corporate book fair division called The Book People, USA. Like their competitors, Scholastic’s book fairs are aimed at large companies and hospitals. Scholastic will automatically offer any book fair host 10% of the proceeds to give to the charity of its choice. Given our long partnership, Scholastic folks immediately approached ROR to suggest that ROR programs could benefit by being a suggested recipient of such donations.

So, in early August, an informational package about this fundraising possibility was mailed to ten large Massachusetts sites. Knowing how popular such events are with Boston Medical Center (BMC) employees, especially during the holidays, BMC ROR coordinator Jessica Goldberg jumped at the chance to earn her ROR program some unrestricted funds, immediately booking three bookfairs for the coming year.

“The vendors I’ve previously dealt with were salesmen first, working for companies often in no way aligned with the principles behind Reach Out and Read,” said Jess. “Not only is a partnership between Scholastic and Reach Out and Read a natural and obvious union, but knowing what I do about the company’s professionalism and commitment to literacy through my book ordering and other dealings, I expect nothing less than quality fundraising events. I’m very hopeful ... I think BMC employees will flock to this event!”

If you would like to discuss how it works, or would like to find out how it went for BMC, please do email me. I’ll be happy to discuss pros and cons, strategies, etc.

But what if we’re a small program and our health center doesn’t get enough foot traffic to support a corporate book fair? Our goal is to help smaller programs partner with large local companies that might wish to choose your ROR program as its beneficiary of the 10% charitable donation. This is still in the formative stages, but don’t hesitate to contact me with ideas and questions. Maybe your program can raise funds via a bookfair after all.



On September 8th, the new round of Mass. League of Community Health Center’s HealthCorps members were trained by the ROR Mass. Programs Administrator. In the two-hour training the group was briefed on the protocol and mission of ROR and learned what is involved in administering an ROR program. A portion of each HealthCorps member’s time each week will be dedicated to assisting the ROR program at their clinic. This is the second year of Reach Out and Read-Massachusetts’ partnership with the Mass. League.



A random sampling of 55 completed Site Observation forms leads us to note that Massachusetts ROR programs do successfully handle ROR program administration right along with their busy workloads. But, best of all? Books are, indeed, making it off the shelves and into little hands almost 100% of the time.

94% responded that usually or consistently there’s an adequate supply of age- and language-appropriate books available for providers to hand out.

95% feel that the ROR coordinator is consistently or usually able to perform the tasks that ensure smooth operation of their ROR program.

77% say that gently used books are usually or consistently available for sick visits or for siblings tagging along to the well child check. (Call if you’d like suggestions on how to obtain used books.)

98% reported that PCPs are usually or consistently giving out books during the well child exam, with 60% doing so at the beginning of the visit (as recommended).

Yet, a challenge remains in the realm of fundraising. (Note article on Scholastic Book Fairs for a new idea.) 54% report as sometimes or only rarely “actively raising funds” for their program. 25% do so consistently and another 9% usually try to.

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This points up the need for both ROR Medical Consultants and Coordinators to discuss individual fundraising needs with appropriate administrators and staff. If you'd like fundraising ideas...or don't know about the fundraising component...please call Gretchen at 617-629-8042 x234.

ROR National Conference and Capitol Hill Day

Over 200 ROR program coordinators and medical providers from all across the country, including eight from Massachusetts, attended the ROR National Conference in May in D.C. to meet one another, hear various speakers, share best practices, listen to children's authors, and attend break-out sessions on topics ranging from training residents in ROR to creating literacy rich waiting rooms.



Attendees Natalya Krandor, MD and Madeleine St. Denis, RN from Harvard Vanguard/Kenmore Square

The highlight happened the day before. According to Nancy Berman, ROR's Director of Communications, "Holding the 2005 conference in Washington DC presented a unique opportunity for ROR to pilot a Capitol Hill Day. The outcome of the day far exceeded our expectations. An enthusiastic group of more than 100 doctors, nurses, and coordinators from across the country conducted 186 meetings with their legislators."

Taking time from their busy schedules, these ROR advocates spent the day on Capitol Hill informing their representatives in both the House and Senate about Reach Out and Read and asking for their support of its federal funding. Their actions directly contributed to gaining additional needed signatures for upcoming legislative funding. The Senate "dear Appropriators" letter closed for

signature the following day with 49 signers – 20 more signers than we had before Hill Day!

The Massachusetts group (Gretchen Hunsberger, ROR Mass. Programs Administrator; Jessica Goldberg, ROR Coordinator at Boston Medical Center; and Leanne Woods, ROR Coordinator at Martha Eliot Community Health Center) met with staffers in the offices of Congressmen Neal, Capuano, Tierney, and Olver. We reminded them of the mission and goals of ROR, shared some ROR stories, and thanked them for their valuable support. It was gratifying (and enlightening) to perform this grassroots work and witness first hand the everyday workings of democracy-in-action.

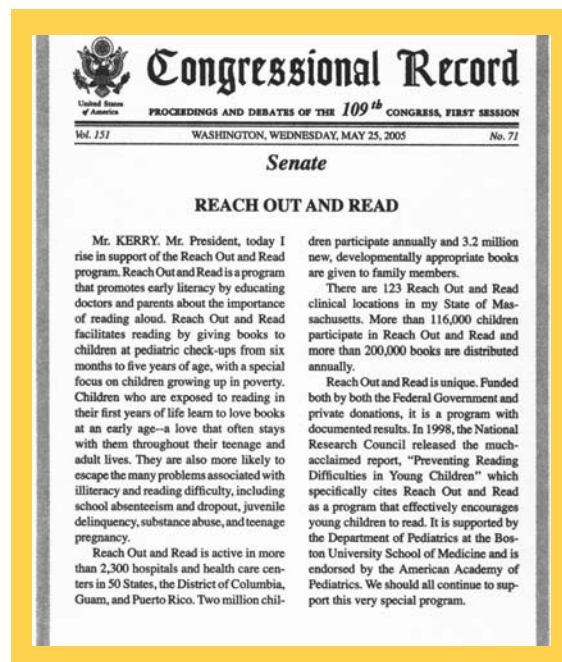


Leanne Woods, ROR coordinator at Martha Eliot Health Center looks over selections from book vendors at the 2005 ROR Conference.

The high point for the Mass. contingent was speaking with Mirah Horowitz, legislative aide to Sen. John Kerry. The result of our lengthy meeting was to better highlight for his new aide how simply, yet powerfully, ROR impacts the residents of Massachusetts and to secure Sen. Kerry's mention of ROR in the Congressional Record of the Senate!

This kind of legislative support for ROR is in sometimes marked contrast to other states, which should make Massachusetts citizens proud. Our policy makers, at both the federal and state level, understand the need for early and strategic interventions to meet the needs of our youngest and most vulnerable residents. So, please, turn on your computer and write to your reps, both here and in Washington! Thank them for their support of your ROR program. Hearing directly from constituents, DOES make a difference!

To find out who your representative is please contact: kelly.taranto@reachoutandread.org



Massachusetts 2005 Congressional Record

For our ROR MEDICAL PROVIDERS...

Are you a fan of ROR? If so, please email me a quote or testimonial for possible inclusion in a new ROR information sheet. Consider, perhaps:

- Why do you like practicing ROR?
- Do you have a warm story/telling anecdote?
- How has ROR changed the mood in your practice/clinic?
- Does it make the well child exam simpler/friendlier/more fun?
- How does it help your patients?
- Are you reaching the families you hoped you would?

Send your quotes to:
gretchen.hunsberger@reachoutandread.org. Nothing will be printed without your permission.

Need a retraining? Contact me and we'll be happy to retrain/revitalize your physicians, nurses, and nurse practitioners. We can provide lunch or present during a monthly meeting.

New staff? Don't forget to show them (or let them sign out) the ROR "blue" training video (22 minutes) or direct them to the on-line, one credit CME course at www.bu.edu/cme/ror

Kindly remember: Every time a staff member (MD, RN, PA or NP) is trained by video and/or CME course, please forward his/her name and credentials to: jackie.miller@reachoutandread.org. We keep track of these numbers for state and federal grant purposes.



Greater Boston ROR physicians, did you know... Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) disseminates information to parents about the almost formidable process of registering a child for kindergarten in the Boston Public Schools. Since Kindergarten is NOT mandatory, some parents do not even know it exists. Additionally, there are over 80 public elementary schools from which parents must choose, specific rounds of registration exist from Jan-May, special school preview times are created so parents can more thoughtfully decide among schools, and specific documents are needed at time of registration. An information sheet, available in several different languages, is available to give out to your patients sometime before or at the pre school visit. Boston Medical Center participates in this very important effort and has input the information right into their electronic medical records. It is then printed out as needed, acting much like a prescription. ROR's entire mission is to help get kids ready to learn. CTK's mission is to make sure families know how to enroll their children. If you

practice in greater Boston and would like to be a conduit for this invaluable information, please contact Denise Snyder at Countdown to Kindergarten, 617-735-3276 or dsnyder@boston.k12.ma.us.



At the invitation of Dr. Martha McCarty, (Alewife Brook Pediatrics, Arlington), I gave a 20 minute presentation on ROR at Winchester Hospital's monthly pediatric meeting to attending physicians with practices in Malden, Reading, Arlington and Stoneham. ROR's message to private practitioners? Clinics aren't the only places children at risk receive health care. Many private practices have patients who receive public assistance or are otherwise in need ... families not yet fluent in English, minimum wage earners with (or without) insurance, children who are not sufficiently spoken to or read to ... ROR would like to work with you, if possible. Applications and information are available at www.reachoutandread.org And, please help us spread the word! If your hospital would like to schedule an ROR presentation, please call 617-629-8042 x234.

LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS?

Boston Cares, the Boston area non-profit dedicated to promoting volunteerism, has offered to help find volunteers for ROR programs in the greater Boston area. You may be contacted to see if you'd like a volunteer, but don't hesitate to contact Denise Riebman at 617-422-0910 x203 or email: driebman@bostoncares.org if you are now looking for volunteer readers! She may be able to help.

From the realm of GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS...

...some Very Good News. In late June, the Massachusetts House and Senate passed, and the Governor signed, the FY06 state budget, which included \$500,000 for Reach Out and Read. "While this is the sixth year that ROR has received state funding, securing it this year involved a much more intensive legislative effort than in years past," says Matt Veno, ROR's governmental affairs advisor. "In a year of transition to new leadership in the House of Representatives, success this year required building new relationships while leaning on some old ones. In this effort, we relied on the relationships that many sites have with the key members of the legislature. To those who answered the call to help, we are grateful. Thank you for all your help!"



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PLEASE PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

14% Increase in Book Allowance!

Reach Out and Read National has just increased the amount per book to \$2.75 up from \$2.50.



ROR's Impact in Massachusetts

- 129 ROR clinical locations
- 122,052 children participate annually
- 205,820 new books distributed annually

Please Pass The Word!

Prospective ROR programs can now complete their applications on-line. For complete information please go to:
www.reachoutandread.org/program.html

ROR grows through word of mouth...
Please forward this to a provider who may be interested in starting a ROR program anywhere in the Commonwealth.