



# REACH OUT AND READ ALABAMA

## 2011 ANNUAL REPORT



[reachoutandread.org](http://reachoutandread.org)

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**Dr. Pippa Abston is the medical director of the Reach Out and Read program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Huntsville Regional Medical Campus.** Each year, residents from the UAB Family Medicine program rotate through the Pediatric clinic—training to distribute books to over 1,200 children at well-child visits that year through Reach Out and Read. More than 70% of the clinic’s families are living in poverty. UAB Huntsville is celebrating its fifth proud year of participation.

In our practice—with so many parents who painfully remember struggles with reading in school and were not raised to love books—the Reach Out and Read program helps me reframe the whole book experience for families. There is no pressure, no “points” to earn, no chance of failure—just the simple pleasure of cuddling with a child and enjoying the beauty of a new book. Parents see their child’s positive reaction immediately, and I can help them build on that happy first exposure.

I start talking about discipline early in my practice—sharing that the word discipline comes from the Latin for “teaching” and doesn’t have anything to do with punishment. When a baby is 1 month old, I have the parents imagine she is 30 years old and then ask, “What do you want her to have learned from you about what kind of person to be?” I get wonderful answers—the most popular responses are about education. **“I want him to go to college.” “I want her to value education.”**

I ask how they plan to teach these long-term goals, and eventually they all figure out that setting an example is the best way. I encourage parents to read in front of their children and share something they learned that day from reading. Through support for the parent and books for the children, Reach Out and Read helps families share the joy of reading and learning together.



**Dr. Faison knew Reach Out and Read’s impact in families’ lives and was inspired to reinvigorate the program when she joined Bibb Medical Associates.** Dr. Faison and her staff engage the families of over 700 Bibb County children annually by prescribing books and encouraging reading together. According to **2011 Voices for Alabama’s Children Kids Count Data Book**, Bibb County has the highest first grade retention rate in 67 counties (7.1%) despite more than 25% of those children living in poverty.

Learning to read as a child was a sign that I was officially becoming a “big girl.” In retrospect, I was always very independent—and impatient. I was the youngest of three children, always needing someone to do something for me or help me. I wanted to prove that I could do things by myself—like being able to read. My older sister was very smart and spent much of her time reading. I can remember my mom and dad reading in the kitchen on Sunday evenings, and my older sister in our bedroom also reading. **I used to think, “I can’t wait until I can read!”**

When I started to learn how to read, I practiced with my mom by reading signs and spelling words. The ultimate recognition was being asked to read my grandmother’s cards out loud at family gatherings! In tangible and intangible ways, I got the message from a very young age—reading and education are important, and are to be celebrated and rewarded.

After graduating from Robert E. Lee High School in Montgomery, I went to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. It was one of the best decisions I made. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology, I moved back to Montgomery where I attended Alabama State University and received a Master of Science in Biology. I stayed on and taught Biology for one year before going to medical school at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

My first experience with Reach Out and Read was as a medical student doing my Internal Medicine and Pediatrics outpatient rotation. I saw pure joy on children’s faces as I gave them new books. When I became an Internal Medicine and Pediatrics resident, our residency program did not have a reading program. With permission, I began Wayne State University School of Medicine’s Reach Out and Read Program for Internal Medicine and Pediatrics. To this day, it is one of the things that I am most proud of. As a physician, my passion for early literacy stems from knowing that a good education in this country can take a person from “the poor house” to “the White House.” Although I have no desire to become the president of the United States, I recognize that I may be giving a book to a child that will end up there. **That thought makes me smile!**



**Read and Romp**

On a sunny Saturday morning, more than 250 families spent three glorious hours outside in Railroad Park. They were there to play—and to learn to love reading.

The inaugural Read and Romp Birmingham—a free event co-sponsored by Reach Out and Read, the United Way’s Success by 6, Alabama Public Television, and Books-A-Million—had a simple mission: to encourage parents to actively engage in the promotion of literacy with their children by reading and doing fun reading activities together.

The day included storybook stations from eleven different organizations including Artplay, Children’s Hospital, Childcare Resources, the Literacy Council, the Birmingham Museum of Art, McWane Science Center, Fresh Air Family, the Birmingham Zoo, the YWCA, the Jefferson County Department of Health, and Books-A-Million, who offered free children’s books and life-sized characters from popular stories.



**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**

More than 3,000 copies of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* were distributed this summer by 32 practices and clinics throughout the state. These sites—and their 110 providers—also hosted “hungry caterpillar” events and activities, encouraging families to Read Together...Eat Healthy...Grow Strong.



**Summer Of A Million Books**

For the second annual Summer of a Million Books, Reach Out and Read-Alabama partnered with Books-A-Million stores throughout the state to collect for the sites in their areas. The 26 participating stores collected 10,000 books to be given away at 48 Reach Out and Read sites.





**Military Initiative**

Reading aloud is a proven technique to help children cope with stress and anxiety—natural disasters, separation from a parent, fear of the dark, starting school, etc.—regardless of the type of difficult situation. Because of the unique pressures on military families—separation, deployment, injury, or even death—Reach Out and Read established its first military site in 1999 at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. With early support from the Department of Defense, Reach Out and Read began implementing its literacy program at targeted U.S. Military healthcare facilities, laying the foundation to one day serve all military families with young children. The Military Initiative was formally launched in 2006.

In April 2011, Reach Out and Read’s Military Initiative was invited to partner with **Joining Forces**, the White House initiative to honor and support America’s service members and their families. In October, **NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams** highlighted Reach Out and Read’s Military Initiative as part of its “Making a Difference on the Homefront” series.

Two military sites will be coming on board in Alabama this year—the **42MGD Pediatric Clinic at Maxwell Air Force Base** and **Lyster Army Health Clinic at Fort Rucker**.

**United States Office of Special Education Services**

Reach Out and Read was one of 135 poster presentations at the recent OSEP Project Director’s Conference. Numerous attendees expressed high levels of interest in the Developmental Disabilities Provider Guide and parental guidance tear-off sheets, which highlight tips for reading together with children with autism, ADHD, cerebral palsy, low vision, speech limitations, hearing loss, and intellectual impairment. Alabama-specific program information demonstrated the significant impact Reach Out and Read is having statewide. Susan Williamson, Director of the Alabama State Personal Development Grant for the Alabama State Department of Education, Special Education Services, explained the wonderful partnership between SPDG and Reach Out and Read that has made Alabama’s growing reach possible.



**Public Support**

Reach Out and Read is grateful for the support of legislators at the state and federal level. By visiting Reach Out and Read programs in their districts, key members of Congress were able to experience firsthand the dramatic impact in the communities they represent.



Clockwise from top left: Representative Mo Brooks visits Infants’ and Children’s Clinic, Florence; Representative Mike Rogers visits Pediatric Associates, Valley; Representative Jo Bonner visits Fairhope Pediatrics

**Corporations and Foundations 2011**

- WalMart
- Target
- Brewton Medical Center
- Angell Foundation
- Anniston Community Education Foundation
- Lauderdale County Community Development Fund
- Women’s Executive Network, Anniston
- Pediatric Adolescent Medicine
- Gadsden Pediatric Clinic
- Sid & Addie Paul Foundation
- Jones Family Fund
- Children’s Hospital
- Cleburne Medical Clinic
- Wiregrass Foundation
- Alabama State Department of Education, Division of Special Education
- Landers Charitable Fund

**Reach Out and Read Staff**

- Polly McClure  
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