Increasing the visibility of Reading Recovery and our members’ work is an important role for RRCNA. We are conducting outreach to organizations that share similar values and priorities — building bridges with school principals and administrators, state education agencies, and organizations focused on getting children reading on grade level.

It was thrilling, then, to receive an invitation from the White House to participate in President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) event in mid-October, hosted along with the White House Office of Social Innovation, U.S. Department of Education, Campaign for Black Male Achievement, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, and Results for America.

Dante Marshall, one of the first children in the U.S. to receive Reading Recovery lessons, accompanied me and RRCNA President Lindy Harmon to the event. Mr. Marshall was chosen to participate in a morning panel discussion, livestreamed from the White House, titled “What Works in Action.” Our interactive exhibit featured behind-the-glass and advocacy videos, Where Are They Now success stories, children’s artwork, What Works Clearinghouse fact sheets, and more.

White House officials, federal agency representatives, foundations, nonprofits, private sector, and members of the media attended and interacted with program representatives from across the country, learning of their positive impact across MBK’s cradle-to-college-and-career-goals.

From the moment RRCNA announced the visit on social media our Facebook and Twitter pages were flooded with excitement. On Facebook we reached over 47,500 users in one day along with over 100 retweets and 2,200 Twitter impressions. During the livestream, we kept followers updated with to-the-minute posts and tweets.

The MBK What Works Showcase featured 33 evidence-based program models and interventions—Reading Recovery was one of just six with strong evidence of effectiveness—that address the seven core tenets of the MBK initiative:

1. Getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn
2. Reading at grade level by third grade
3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career
4. Completing postsecondary education or training
5. Successfully entering the workforce
6. Keeping kids on track and giving them second chances
7. Empowering parents and engaging caring adults and mentors

This special opportunity to showcase Reading Recovery was a team effort. Our thanks to all of you who helped make it happen and spread the word!

Photo highlights of the visit

top — White House Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson shakes hands with RRCNA President Lindy Harmon. Joining the conversation are Dante Marshall, Dave Wilkinson, director of the White House Office of Social Innovation, and Michael Smith, special assistant to the President, My Brother’s Keeper.

middle — The What Works in Action panel presentation featured Dante and other beneficiaries of evidence-based programs across the country.

bottom — Videos and printed examples were on display during the afternoon exhibit. Reading Recovery was one of only five reading interventions featured, and the only one rated with “strong” evidence.
Remembering Rose Mary

When Dante Marshall shared his story on the MBK panel, he fondly remembered his Reading Recovery teacher, Rose Mary Estice, as the person in his corner who made the difference on his pathway to success. It was bittersweet to acknowledge her recent passing. Rose Mary died October 2, following a 5-year battle with cancer. Dante was among the speakers at her memorial service. The two had stayed in touch for more than 30 years.

Rose Mary was one of the original Reading Recovery teachers trained by Marie Clay and Barbara Watson in 1984–85 at The Ohio State University, and she taught Dante during the pilot year in Columbus Public Schools. She was most proud of that pioneering work in Reading Recovery.

An ardent supporter of RRCNA, Rose Mary provided leadership during the organization’s early days and continued that support throughout her career — serving on Development and National Conference committees, writing articles for Council publications, and most recently narrating the running record professional learning modules.

It was Rose Mary’s wish that donations be made to RRCNA, and more than $4,000 has already been donated. You can honor her devotion and commitment to children by making a gift to the Reading Recovery Fund in her memory.