Fund Challenge Total Tops $22,000

Attendees at this year’s National Conference united in literacy success to donate to the Reading Recovery Fund Challenge. About 200 donors were able to raise just over $11,000, with a generous match by Pioneer Valley Books raising the total beyond the $22,000 mark.

RRCNA Development Committee Chair Annie Opat and Kentucky Principal Gerry Brooks brought some fun to the challenge via video and on stage. With her roots in Kansas, Annie urged donations to avoid an appearance from the ‘Wicked Witch of the West.’ Pioneer Valley Books President Michele Dufresne, along with Bella and Rosie, also joined the fun on stage after Gerry’s video suggestion that the dogs may have run off with the money.

The Reading Recovery Fund allows RRCNA to continue its work supporting education policy, adequate school funding, meaningful professional development, ongoing research, and outreach to decision makers. We thank our generous donors for their support of Reading Recovery.

Our Continued Thanks to Hameray and Kaleidoscope Series Authors

Over the last 7 years, Hameray Publishing Group and the authors of its Kaleidoscope Collection have donated sales revenue and royalties totaling $69,077 to RRCNA. These leveled readers were written by a group of experienced Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, literacy coaches, and reading specialists — all members of RRCNA. Each year at the National Conference, Hameray President Kevin Yuen and his parents, Ray and Christine Yuen, have presented a check to RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson. Many thanks are extended to the authors listed below and to the Yuens!

- Susan Antonelli
- Elaine S. Belay
- Nancy R. Brekke
- Agatha Brown
- Gregory H. Brown
- Lillian Burriss
- Natalie Byerly
- Lucretia Cahill
- Sharyl M. Calhoun
- JoAnne Demetrio
- Karen B. Diaz
- Paula Dugger
- Jamie A. Duncan
- Rebecca Gibson
- Heather Goodacre
- Anita Goodwin
- Janelle Green
- Geraldine Haggard
- Carolyn M. Harding
- Samantha Harris
- Teri Horner
- Jane Hunter
- Kimberly A. Hurley
- Gaynell R. Jamison
- Rhonda Johnson
- Christine Jojola
- Jean Marie Junis
- Lisa Burnet Killebrew
- Amy Klopfenstein
- Elizabeth L. Larrabee
- Patti Lindsay
- Reva Lobatos
- Melissa Martin
- John T. McCarrier
- Rhonda McDonald
- Mary McHugh-Mullane
- Jo Beth McKee
- Debra G. Moeller
- Rita Nicolussi
- Liza O’Neal
- Gennifer Paul-Fetterman
- Miguel Perez-Soler
- Sharon R. Powell
- Tracy Rawles
- Molly J. Reed
- Lisa A. Richardson
- Jacqueline Russo
- Susan Sellers
- Rebecca L. Shoniker
- Jan Shoupe
- Elaine M. Simpson
- Andrew Sommer
- Steven V. Steele
- Sandra S. Veach
- Maren Wallenberg
- Susan G. Weaver-Jones
- Kimberly Ziemann
2017-18 Teacher Leader Scholars

Hameray Publishing Group and the Yuen Family Foundation

Hameray Publishing Group is dedicated to publishing innovative literacy materials for today’s educators by combining a sound research-based approach with cutting edge classroom solutions. The Yuen Family Foundation—a private charitable organization—in conjunction with Hameray Publishing Group contributed $15,000 to fund one teacher leader scholarship. Erin Nock, Farmington Public Schools, Farmington, CT, is pictured with donor Ray Yuen.

MaryRuth Books

MaryRuth Books offers instructional, clever books that provide reading practice using photos and illustrations to facilitate word recognition and engage the young reader. The proud publisher of the Danny series of children’s books that provide reading practice and support the development of a lifelong love of reading, MaryRuth Books provided one $15,000 teacher leader scholarship. Pamela Slone, Kentucky Valley Education Cooperative, Hazard, KY, is pictured with donor Mia Coulton (left).

Pioneer Valley Books

Pioneer Valley Books is dedicated to producing the highest-quality books for literacy learners, carefully written to support students in gaining control over early reading behaviors and in becoming strategic in their approach to print. Books have highly supportive pictures, carefully selected reading vocabulary, easy sentence structure, and are specifically designed to help children gain reading fluency and independence. Pioneer Valley Books provided one $15,000 teacher leader scholarship. Recipient Allison Cummins, Bricolage Academy, New Orleans, LA, is pictured with donor Michele Dufresne (left).

Five $15,000 teacher leader training scholarships will be awarded for the 2018–2019 training year. The James P. Verhalen Family Foundation is providing two scholarships, joined by Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation, MaryRuth Books, and Pioneer Valley Books each offering one scholarship.

Read complete requirements and criteria on the RRCNA Grants and Scholarships webpage, then download and submit applications by May 31, 2018.
2018 National Conference Scholars

Tenyo Family Foundation offered 12 grants. The Foundation was founded by the late Sophie Tenyo to support charitable, religious, scientific, literacy, and educational endeavors for the public welfare and well-being of mankind. Recipients are (standing left-to-right) Erin Klopstad, Nevada Community School District, Nevada, IA; Zamara Johnson, Oldham County School District, Crestwood, KY; Sandee Coward, Sarasota County Schools, North Port, FL; Heather Brewer Allen, Bullitt County Public Schools, West Point, KY; Rachel Armstrong, Paoli Community Schools, Paoli, IN; (seated left-to-right) DeeDee (Debora) Verlinde, York Region District School Board, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada; Kelly Russell, Jefferson County School District, Louisville, KY; Charla Mason, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Nashville, TN; Jeffrey Timberlake, Boston Public Schools, East Boston, MA; Catherine Schoon, New Haven Unified School District, Union City, CA; Carol Heeren, DC Everest Public School District, Ringle, WI; and Aimee Sexton, Metcalfe County Schools, Edmonton, KY.

KEEP BOOKS are designed as a school/home book program that addresses the need for inexpensive, but interesting books for young children to read at home. Books include a wide variety of high-interest titles at reading levels appropriate for preK through Grade 2 and are developed to help children learn effective reading strategies. KEEP BOOKS provided two grants. Lisa Silva (left) and Lauren Johnson (right), both of Beaufort County Schools, Chocowinity, NC, are pictured with Marsha Levering of KEEP BOOKS.

Debby Wood Professional Development Grant was established in memory of Debby Wood, who served as a teacher leader in Prince George’s County, MD. Debby was a past recipient of an RRCNA grant to attend the National Conference and always looked forward to the excellent professional development. The recipient is Robin Baudoin, Prince George’s County Public Schools, Seabrook, MD.
Blueberry Hill Books are written by a certified Reading Recovery teacher and carefully designed to enhance a child’s strategic thinking and develop comprehension skills. Recurring characters inhabit stories filled with humor and excitement in the leveled storybooks. Julie Sardo, Sarasota County Schools, North Port, FL, is pictured with donor Patricia Harrison (left).

RR Books, LLC is an educational publisher located in Reading, PA. They offer a variety of fiction and nonfiction leveled books specifically designed for beginning readers. Their goal is to provide quality, affordable books for young children. Sarah Dubensky-Obando, Rochester Community Schools, Rochester, MI, is pictured with donor Matt Bonnell.

SongLake Books hand selects the best books from the best companies and organizes them into leveled book sets for guided reading and Reading Recovery. Book collections include fiction and nonfiction selections with a variety of genres at each level and are culturally diverse and gender fair. Titles are hand-picked to target children of all ability levels, especially at-risk readers. Jessica Hancock, Wayne County School District, Monticello, KY, pictured with donor Sarah English (right).

Rose Mary Estice Memorial Grant was established in memory of Rose Mary Estice, one of the original Reading Recovery teachers trained at The Ohio State University in 1984–85. An ardent supporter, Rose Mary provided leadership during the early days of RRCNA and continued to serve in many capacities throughout her career. Michelle Rentsch, Southeast Local School District, Ravenna, OH, is pictured with donor Ernie Estice.
Teacher Leader Professional Development Grants were funded by the generosity of trainers and teacher leaders during the 2017 Teacher Leader Institute. The Bring Your Bling Silent Auction raised funds for two teacher leader grants. Recipients are (left) Tammy White, Montgomery County Schools, Mt. Sterling, KY; and Christy Germany, San Juan Unified School District, Citrus Heights, CA.

Geri Stone Memorial Fund Grants and Scholarships were established by family members and friends in memory of Geri Stone's leadership and work as a Michigan Reading Recovery teacher leader. Grants and scholarships are awarded to Reading Recovery professionals to help offset the cost of training, professional development, school supplies and projects, and other literacy efforts.

Individual recipients include Beth Delano, Oxford Community Schools, Oxford, MI; Claire Zari, Gwinnett County School District, Sugar Hill, GA; and Lisa Kaemming, Chelsea School District, Chelsea, MI.

Team recipients from Turrill Elementary School, Lapeer, MI, are Steve Smith, Cheryl Smith, and Beth Shemanski.

Team recipients from Schickler Elementary School, Lapeer, MI, are Karen Allen, Amy Duncan, and Kelly Vangel.

Watch your email and the website for 2019 grant opportunities!
Live Twitter Chat Highlights Meeting

A guided tour of RRCNA’s social media platforms, ending with a live Twitter chat, highlighted this year’s meeting of more than 200 members and guests. Hollyanna Bates, Colorado teacher leader and host of our monthly #rrchat, guided Tweeters and introduced drawing emcees Maryann McBride and Barbara Schubert. Generous exhibitors donated dozens of prizes including little books, classroom resources, gift certificates, and more. Thanks to Abrams Learning Trends, Capstone, Engage Literacy, KEEP BOOKS, Magic Spark Literacy, MaryRuth Books, Okapi, Pioneer Valley Books, RC Owen Publishers, Read Naturally, Silver Lady, SongLake Books, Townsend Press, and Writing Out of the Box.

Book List Grows with 158 New Titles

The Reading Recovery Book List Committee recently approved 158 new titles from Capstone Classroom, MaryRuth Books, Pioneer Valley Books, RR Books, and Shine On. That brings the total to 6,173 titles, including 1,317 Spanish titles. Members can create and print custom-sorted lists by title, level, publisher, and other custom sorts in the Members Only Resource Center. To view or print a list of new books, click on “New Book” from the Book List search screen.

Ever wonder how a book makes it on the list? The book leveling process is ongoing, with each review cycle spanning about 15 months. Books are submitted by publishers and undergo an initial screening by the North American Trainers Group Teaching and Professional Development Committee. Publishers are asked to submit 25 copies of selected books for field testing with Reading Recovery teachers and students — an average of 200 titles during each leveling cycle. Teacher-leveled books are then analyzed by Book List Chair Dr. Janet Bufalino and approved by the Committee. This painstaking process ensures that the books listed meet the highest standards of quality for Reading Recovery teaching.

We Welcome Your Thoughts

Do you like sharing opinions with your fellow educators? Do you enjoy expressing yourself through the written word? If so, we have the perfect outlet! Everyone is welcome to submit a post to the RRCNA Connection blog on virtually any topic, from reflection and opinion to teaching tips and anecdotes. To learn more about the blog and how to submit a post, click on “Blog” in the yellow header at the top of the website homepage.
Excellence in Literacy Leadership Awards

Reading Recovery teacher leaders from across the country nominate individuals to receive this prestigious award. It is given annually to individuals not trained in Reading Recovery who have displayed a strong commitment to expand and maintain its high standards, and who made significant contributions to implementation beyond the local level. Three individuals were recognized at the 2018 National Conference in February.

Dr. Amanda Alexander
Chief of the Office of Elementary Schools
Washington, DC

Dr. Alexander provides leadership and vision for the district’s elementary schools and supervises a team of instructional superintendents. She also oversees Head Start and early childhood programs.

The daughter of a former kindergarten teacher began her own career teaching kindergarten in Washington, DC, and later served as an assistant principal in New York City where she first witnessed the powerful impact of Reading Recovery. Returning to Washington, she led literacy initiatives as a principal, instructional superintendent, and deputy chief of elementary schools. The compelling story of Reading Recovery in the nation’s capital is attributed solely to her creative and strategic genius.

"From our first conversation, I recognized Dr. Alexander’s passion for early literacy, her strong belief in the power and potential of Reading Recovery, and her drive to close the gap in first grade in DCPS," said Teacher Leader Linda Randall. “She is deeply committed to preserving the integrity of the intervention and vitally involved in our work. She celebrates and shares the successes, helps problem-solve any challenges, digs deeply into the data, and advocates passionately for ensuring that Reading Recovery will be available for all first graders who need it.”

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She laid the foundation for fidelity of implementation — from hiring trained Reading Recovery teachers, to securing a donation from a private foundation for training teachers and a grant to obtain books and materials, to reaching out to The Ohio State University for guidance and a Maryland site for teacher leader support. DC became a registered site affiliated with OSU in November 2016, and a new training facility is under construction and will be ready for this fall’s training class.

And the efforts are already demonstrating positive effects. Site data improved significantly with a gain of 24 percentage points in 2016–17, and is expected to reach national average this year. Classroom instruction is improving in Reading Recovery schools. And early literacy is now front and center in the District’s strategic plan, with a 5-year path to full implementation of Reading Recovery.

Well-known throughout many urban districts, Dr. Alexander has brought national attention to Reading Recovery. She actively demonstrates the benefits of having skilled Reading Recovery teachers in the most heavily impacted schools in our nation’s capital. And she remains passionate that Reading Recovery, along with strong classroom literacy instruction, will close the achievement gap for all students. As she once wrote, “We will make sure every child leaves first grade as a fluent reader!”

Dr. Dean Baker
Superintendent of School Administrative District 49
Fairfield, ME

For nearly 3 decades, Dr. Dean Baker has provided clear and progressive leadership to schools in Central Maine. He is widely recognized for implementing this successful intervention and is unique among Maine superintendents for having direct responsibility for student curriculum.

And his commitment to Reading Recovery is unwavering. With the guidance and support of Reading Recovery’s founder, Marie Clay, he met with state officials and established one of the first Reading Recovery training sites in Maine. He hosted the governor and education commissioner at the center’s opening in 1993, and as site coordinator, he worked with area superintendents to support teacher leader and teacher training.

He immediately restructured the Title I department, replacing technicians with literacy specialists and insisting that everyone successfully complete Reading Recovery training. He hired staff to fully implement each of his elementary schools and has maintained that level of implementation for decades by shifting staff and hiring replacements — ensuring that every student needing Reading Recovery receives it. Since opening, the training center has hosted more than 24 training classes for area teachers, including those in other districts.
“Dr. Baker’s commitment has been unwavering for over a quarter of a century,” said Teacher Leader Whendy Smith. “His effective leadership provided for strong system designs, and his unconditional support has provided implementation longevity. There have been many times that he was approached with new initiatives and competing demands for funds, but he redirected any creative thinking back to the core business and the standards of Reading Recovery.”

He has held firm his unwavering belief of maintaining an instructional system design that meets young students where they are and intervenes early with good, quality literacy support. That belief has sustained the high-quality implementation of Reading Recovery at the University of Maine Training Center, at the state level, at training sites, and at the local level for all first-grade students in Maine.

Dr. Baker works from a moral compass. Her has been the single constant — always relied on to make strong, informed decisions in the best interest of every member of the team, at every level of implementation.

Veronica Brady
Senior Vice President for Philanthropy
Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Venice, FL

Veronica Brady first heard about Reading Recovery from Keith Monda, former president of Coach Inc. and an early financial supporter of Reading Recovery at The Ohio State University training center. The enthusiasm generated during a lunch meeting of a county educator, a Reading Recovery expert, a local philanthropist, and Veronica was hard to contain. Within 2 weeks of that May meeting, Veronica had raised the necessary funding and received approval to help start Reading Recovery in three Title I schools in Sarasota. Thanks to her commitment, ongoing leadership, fund-raising efforts, and contributions of her time and effort, the district has grown from 3 schools and 6 Reading Recovery teachers to 23 schools and 34 teachers in just 2 years.

Her role as the external coordinator and fund-raiser for this effort hasn’t stopped there. With a passion to reach more children beyond the regular school year, she and Keith designed a program that stipends Reading Recovery teachers to work with students in need at summer camp sites. She actively reaches out to encourage and guide other Florida districts to explore implementation of Reading Recovery. She presented a session titled “Implementing an Intensive Intervention: How Innovation, Partnerships and Philanthropy Can Transform a District” during the Florida Reading Association’s Annual Conference, which led to requests for future presentations. She spearheaded the efforts at Gulf Coast Community Foundation to create a “playbook” outlining steps other communities can take to bring Reading Recovery to their districts.

Veronica’s collaborative efforts to provide Sarasota’s teachers, teacher leader, and schools with the necessary ongoing support has a direct correlation to the district’s successful outcomes. Sarasota County’s site data have shown positive results, with 85% of students who received a full program successfully discontinuing their lessons in 2015–16 and growing to 86% the following year.

“From the inception, Veronica has worked diligently to reach numerous stakeholders and to spread the word about the powerful effects of Reading Recovery,” said Teacher Leader Lisa Fisher. “The benefits reach not only the students, but also impact the Reading Recovery teachers, the collaborating homeroom teachers, the school as a whole, and the families of the children themselves. Her significant contributions to Reading Recovery’s implementation in Florida impacts lifetime trajectories.”
Four days of professional development sparked the enthusiasm of more than 2,000 educators who shared their passion for learning and literacy instruction.

Keynote Speaker Mary Fried (center) kicked off the Conference on Sunday by exploring how Literacy Lessons opens the doors of learning for specialist teachers, reaching a wider range of children with identified special needs. Pictured with Mary are Jady Johnson, RRCNA executive director (left) and Janice Van Dyke, RRCNA president and chair of the 2018 National Conference.

Monday Keynote Speaker Ellin Keene explained how to fully engage students and the relationship between engagement and understanding. She also greeted attendees during her book signing following the general session.

Keynote Speaker Pat Cummings wrapped up the Conference by illustrating the love of reading and curiosity in her own life and how it can turn young readers into lifelong explorers.

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There was a buzz of excitement throughout the conference that provided research-based literacy instruction and balanced theory with practice. Attendees left with new understandings to support effective literacy instruction that increases student achievement.

Speaker Douglas Reeves (above) challenged administrators in the day-long Leadership Institute to redefine educational accountability by providing high-impact leadership.