



KIDS NEED TO READ
Inspiring Imagination

WWW.KIDSNEEDTOREAD.ORG

2024-2025 Annual Report

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“The donations we receive from Kids Need to Read have been an amazing blessing for our monthly reading program for preschool children. The local police department volunteers their time to come to our office and read to these children. They so enjoy the time and get to choose books to take home. Thank you for this opportunity. “

Valerie Hollobaugh , Native American Fatherhood and Families Association, Mesa, Arizona



Our Mission:

Kids Need to Read helps children discover the joy of reading and the power of a literate mind by providing inspiring books and literacy programs to underfunded schools, libraries, and community agencies across the United States, especially those serving disadvantaged children.



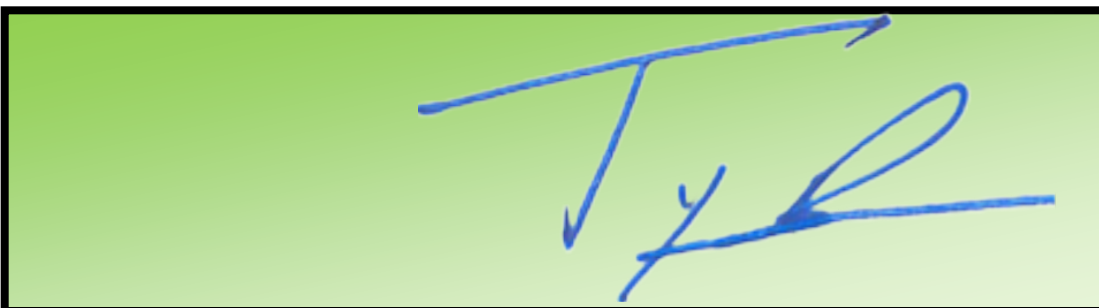
Letter from the Chair Person,

One can never overestimate the importance of reading. Victor Hugo, French poet and novelist, best known for his famous work, *Les Misérables*, declared, ***"To learn to Read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."*** At Kids Need to Read, we believe reading is the most important skill a child can develop to become a productive member of society. Books open children's minds to a world of possibility, while stimulating their intellect, imagination and intelligence, especially during their formative years. Like Dr. Seuss, we believe that ***"The more that you Read, the more things you'll Know. The more you Learn, the more Places you'll go!"***

During our fiscal year, 2024 – 2025, Kids Need to Read continued its mission to provide thousands of books to at risk children living in low socioeconomic communities. In excess of 80,000 children were served and **over \$1.4 million in books were distributed through the organization's three major programs:** From Our Shelves to Yours (national), The Page Coach (southwestern region), and Share Our Libraries (national). These continuously expanding programs touch the lives of children who lack access to books, and therefore the ability to keep pace with children surrounded by a wealth of reading resources. Our sincere gratitude goes to our major Program Funding Partners and Book Contributors: Light the World, Arizona Renaissance Festival, Barnes & Noble, Cox Charities, Elkes Foundation III, Embraer Foundation, Employees Community Fund of Boeing Arizona, Highlights for Children, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Kathy and Jerry Wood Foundation, Mesa United Way, PetSmart Charities/PetSmart West Valley Stores, Pi Beta Phi Arizona, Beta Chapter, Pi Beta Phi Foundation, Pi Beta Phi Phoenix Alumnae Club, Square Egg Entertainment, and Thunderbirds Charities. These contributors, along with many other generous agencies and individuals, make the important work of Kids Need to Read possible.

Thanks to Jessica Payne, our Executive Director, whose tireless efforts are an inspiration to us all. Thanks also to Leah Erne, Warehouse Manager; Levi Chaplin Payne, Warehouse Assistant, Board Members Theresa Warber, Secretary, Jaime Breinholt and Glenna Breinholt. Last, but certainly not least, we are grateful for and appreciate greatly our Advisory Council composed of Bruce Matsunaga, Heather Miller, Tiffany Ellington, Kim O'Brien, Denise Gary, Joe Boudrie, Gary Mlodzik, Diane Elhard, Tina Mlodzik and Julieanne Kucera, whose talents have enriched the lives of so many.

Best wishes and happy reading,
Tyson Breinholt, Board Chairman
Kids Need to Read



Letter from the Executive Director

“Kids Need to Read helps our community each and every time they do a donation. I am so grateful that they think of us and my students in Yuma, Arizona. I love watching the student's faces as they find new books available in the library! ”

Amanda Coltman, District Librarian, Yuma Elementary School District 1, Yuma, Arizona

Dear Friends,

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” — Margaret Mead

At Kids Need to Read, these words ring true every single day. From our volunteers to our donors, partners, and team members, it is your thoughtful commitment that fuels our mission — putting books into the hands of children and helping them unlock the power of literacy.

This year, we proudly turned the page on an exciting new chapter. Fiscal Year 2024–2025 brought with it new programs, broader reach, and a continued focus on building equity through literacy. We launched Share Our Libraries, a program that builds upon our Grow Your Library legacy by supporting underfunded libraries across the country. We also began laying the foundation for **Page Turners**, a vibrant new program led by Advisory Council member Tiffany Ellington, which will expand our ability to foster lifelong reading habits in even more communities.

Our impact has never been stronger. For the first time in over five years, we served young readers in **Puerto Rico**, in addition to reaching children in **25 states and the District of Columbia**. This year alone, we donated **over 100,000 books** and served **more than 83,000 children** — each one a powerful reminder of what's possible when people come together with purpose.

While our warehouse remains the same, our reach and ambitions continue to grow. Within those walls, thousands of stories wait to be discovered by eager hands and curious minds across the country.

As always, the greatest reward is found in the eyes of a child clutching their very first book, the joy of a young reader discovering a world beyond their own, and the hope we see sparked again and again through the simple act of reading.

Thank you for being part of this extraordinary story. Together, we're not just giving books — we're giving children the tools to imagine, to learn, and to lead.

Happy Reading,

Jessica Payne, Executive Director, Kids Need to Read



Board of Directors 2024-2025

Tyson Breinholt, Chairman
Jessica Payne, Executive Director
Theresa Warber, Secretary
Jamie Breinholt, Director
Glenna Breinholt, Director

Advisory Council 2024-2025

Bruce Matsunaga, Ph.D.	Gary Mlodzik
Heather Miller	Tina Mlodzik
Joe Boudrie	Martha Nielson
F. Diane Elhard	Kim O'Brien
Tiffany Ellington	Austin Yost

Staff

Jessica Payne
Executive Director

Leah Erne
Warehouse Manager,
Program Lead

Levi Payne
Warehouse Assistant



We are incredibly grateful for the book donations from Kids Need to Read! These books have been a valuable addition to our library programs. The impact on literacy and the joy of reading has been evident, and we truly appreciate this generous support. Thank you for making a difference!"

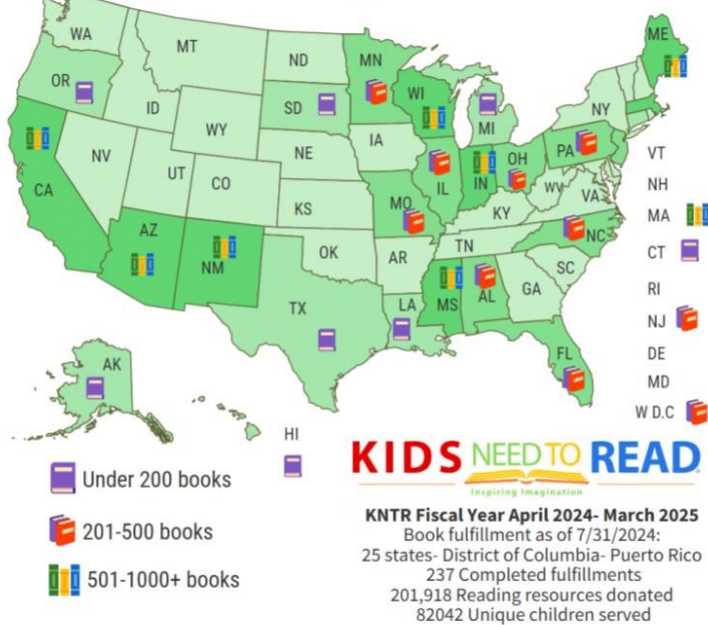
Amy Otto, Mesa Public Library - Dobson Branch Mesa, AZ



Our Impact 2024-2025

Books

April 2024 through March 2025

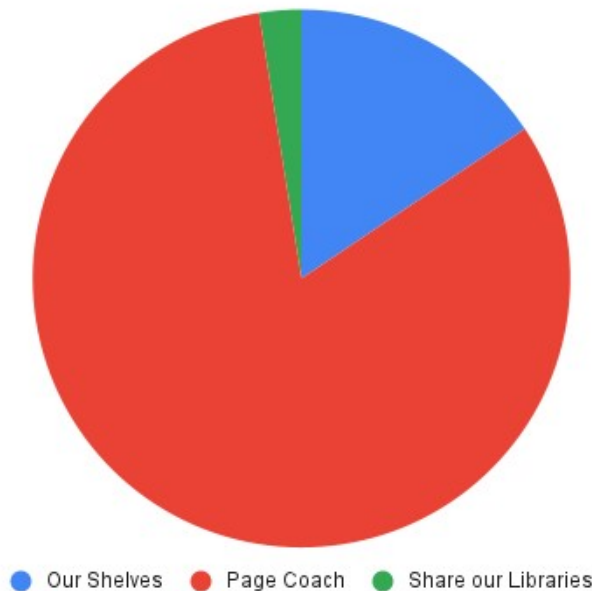
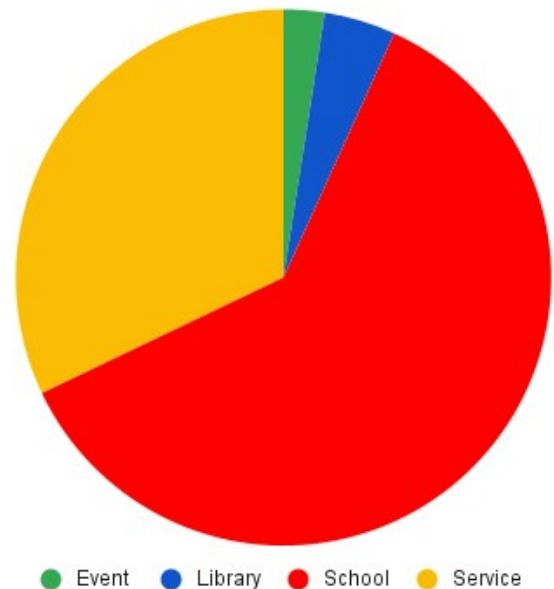


Growing our Giving

This year Kids Need to Read completed 237 fulfillments or orders for books. Those orders contained 201,915 books and reading resources worth over \$1.4 million dollars. This year is the first year serving Puerto Rico in over 5 years!

Who is providing book access to children?

Representing 162 unique applicants, this chart breaks down the types of organizations or community events Kids Need to Read partnered with to bring high-quality books and reading resources to children. The children served live in families with incomes with an average of 82% below the poverty line across all 3 programs



How do our Programs serve?

A grand total of 237 requests for books and reading resources serving 82,042 unique children were fulfilled. This chart represents a breakdown of the Kids Need to Read programs. Each program is built to address a type of geographical need. Share Our Libraries focuses on rural libraries, From Our Shelves to Yours addresses needs outside of Arizona and Page Coach Territory. The Page Coach addresses the literary needs of communities within a driving distance of Kids Need to Read

This donation helped the event immensely, we were able to connect with so many families and it was a back to school initiative, the kids were so happy and excited to choose their own book to take home and had a lot of fun! This also helped the parent engage with their children to encourage a reading night.

—Britney Joe, Community Health and Wellness Director- Native Health, Phoenix, AZ



Let's Get Kids Reading

Not all literacy needs are the same—and at Kids Need to Read, we understand that getting children excited about reading often requires more than just handing them a book. That's why we've developed a variety of creative, interactive strategies to tailor our support to the specific needs of the communities we serve. This report highlights the tools and programs we've refined and expanded to help our partners foster a lasting love of reading in the children they serve.

Our ***Storybook Adventures*** initiative brings books to life through live character performances that capture children's imaginations. Whether it's a pirate, mermaid, Viking, or holiday-themed guest like the beloved Christmas Cat Lady, these immersive experiences make story time unforgettable. We also collaborate with local cosplay groups, authors, and community figures to make each event feel magical and meaningful.

The ***Wheel of Literacy*** continues to be a fan favorite at community and school events. Children spin to discover their "literary fate," winning prizes like reading buddies or activity books from Highlights for Children. More than just a fun game, it creates a sense of excitement and achievement around reading.

This year also marked the launch of our new ***Share Our Libraries*** program, which supports rural and underfunded libraries with curated book donations to expand collections and strengthen outreach efforts. In its inaugural year, we proudly partnered with six libraries across Arizona, helping them reconnect with their communities through book giveaways, storytime events, and fresh, diverse titles for readers of all ages.

From story times to career talks, book giveaways to community events, our work goes far beyond distributing books. Kids Need to Read is committed to creating meaningful, lasting experiences that spark joy, ignite curiosity, and unlock the power of literacy for every child we serve.

Kids Need to Read Contributors 2024-2025

Fiscal April 1, 2024 -March 31, 2025

\$25,000 to \$10,000

Arizona Alpha Pi Beta Phi
Beyond Words Foundation
Employees Community Fund of Boeing
Kathy and Jerry Woods Foundation
Northwest Christian School
Private Donor
United Agents of Arizona Charities

\$6,000 to \$1,000

Benevity
Bethany Harowitz
Breinholt-Anderson Insurance Consultants
Gary & Tina Mlodzik
Gerald & Joan Colangelo Family Trust
Hirtle Callaghan & Co LLC
Janis Chapman Merrill
Jess & Shelia Schwartz Family Foundation
Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Phoenix
Justine Woods
Lupine Entertainment
Nathan Laufer
Northrop Grumman Foundation
Pi Beta Phi—Alumni
Sandra & Harvey Belfer Foundation
Star Wars Clubs of Arizona
Steven Goldstein
Square Egg Entertainment
The Bookish Box
Private Donors
Walmart Spark Grant
William S & Ina Levine Foundation

Under \$1,000

Altrusa of the west Valley
American Express Charitable Giving
American Online Giving
Andrew Stringenz
Arizona Gives

Arizona Renaissance Festival
Brandon Snider
Bruce Matsunaga
Cathy Rosenbaum
Charity Gift Certificates
Chrissy Pelland
Cyber Grants - SRP employees
Fidelity Charitable
Fry's Food Stores/ Kroger
Gilbert Lions Club
Heather Hinks
Heroes United of Arizona
James Mann
Janette Conroy
Jesse Raspler
Jim & Renee Grenspon
Joel Kramer
Kim O Brien
Macon Dreams Come True Foundation
Marc & Adiba Wichansky
Mesa United Way
Mike Chance
Parkwood Baptist Church
PayPal Giving Fund
Private Donors
Run Your Race AZ
Sarah Beck
Sara McCaughan
Sun Lakes Lions Foundation
Sharing the Good Life
Smart City Networks
Tucson Comic Con
Virginia Snedeker
Wells Fargo
Your Cause

“We are a small nonprofit, with limited resources both financial and inventory for our Summer Food Service Program. By receiving the donation of books, we are able to entice low-income children who participate in our summer lunch program to stay with us to eat their lunch (meaning we can count them to receive reimbursement from the USDA), for those that join us in person for lunch, after 5 days, receive a prize. Thank you for your generosity and support of these deserving children and for our program! During the summer of 2024, we served 16,993 meals to children experiencing food insecurity, and we anticipate that number to rise for the 2025 summer program months.”

Kimberly Goy , Development Director— Monroe Community Kitchen, Bloomington, IN

Kids Need to Read Contributors 2024-2025

Fiscal April 1, 2024-March 31, 2025

Reading Resources

\$10,000 and above

Anonymous Donors Total
Corona Del Sol HS Student Club
DK Publishing
Penelope Paine, Author
Brandy Vicks, Author
Banes and Noble Booksellers Phoenix Area
PetSmart Charities– Peoria
Isabelle Green (Scouts Project)

\$6,000 to \$1,000

Abrams Books
Aurelia Bowen
Gilbert Christian Schools
Amazon Brilliance Publishing
Anonymous Donor
Arizona Renaissance Festival
Bank of America
Barbara Meland
Chloe Goodhart
DECA Club
Ecolab
Eric Artisan, Author
Erin Linford (Club Donation)
J-Teen (Club Donation)
Go KerPlunk LLC
Lea Fales
Melinda Mazurkiewitz
Michael Dow, Author
National Charity League of Phoenix
Penguin Random House
Simon and Schuster Publishers
Anthony Caliendo (Student Book Drive)

Under \$1000

Amazon Book Donors
Bank of America
Bookends Literary
Theresa Warber
Jake Parker (Student Book Drive)
David Mihlon
Guardian Books, Norm Black
Hachette Book Group
Kids First Pediatric Dentistry
American Lawyer Association
Marish & Joseph Cautilli, Authors
Jennifer Rabby
Leah Erne

Jessica Payne
Helping Humanity Teen Club
Judy Laufer, Author
Parth Dharma, Author
Laura Knight, Author
Alan Venable, Author
Pippin Properties
Sara Zarr
STEM Jump
Deb Dorcheus
Better World Books
Kathleen Wisneski
Library Tales Publishing
Kristen Luby
Luke Villermin, Author
Pat Maliedi
Pi Beta Phi ASU– Beta Chapter
Janet Campbell, Artisan

Book Drives for Kids Need to Read

Book drives are an essential part of Kids Need to Read's ability to serve thousands of children each year. They help us build a diverse and plentiful inventory of gently used and New books that are perfect for the many different literacy needs we serve. These drives not only provide much-needed reading materials for children in underserved communities, but also engage the public in our mission—turning a simple act of giving into a powerful tool for literacy.

Desert Wellness
Kids First Pediatric Dentistry
American Lawyer Association
Barnes and Noble Book Sellers
National Charity League of Phoenix
Arizona Renaissance Festival
Pi Beta Phi ASU– Beta Chapter
Ecolab
Bank of America



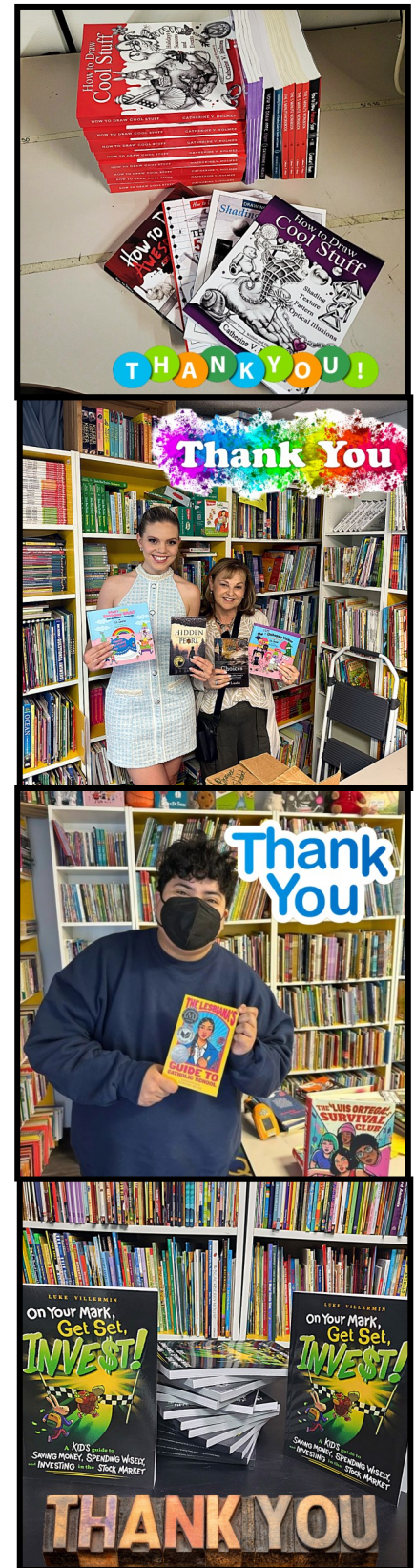
Kids Need to Read Contributors 2024—2025

Fiscal April 1, 2024-March 31, 2025

Supporting Authors & Publishers*

Abrams Publishing*
 Amazon Brilliance*
 Amy Krouse Rosenthal
 Foundation *
 Olivia Abrahi
 Laurelle Adrian
 Eric Artisan
 Ryan Bani
 Jennifer Bertman
 Laura Bullock
 Michael Burgan
 Madeline Burt
 N. D. Byma
 Cindy Callaghan
 Beth Cato
 Marisha & Joe Cautilli
 Debbie Chamberlain
 Channing Chasten
 Soman Chainani
 Ryan Dalton
 Parth Dama
 Anthony C Delauney
 Nicollette Dimaggi
 Lea Fales
 Alan Finneey
 Amy Fellner Dominy
 Karl Fields
 Shannon Gibley
 Go KerPlunk*
 Robin Reynolds Gold
 Shana Gorian
 Margaret Peterson Haddix
 Lucy Harrison
 Hatchett Book Group*
 Lorraine Hawley
 Yvonne Hayden
 Leanna Hieber
 Raven Howell
 Brett Hymphrey
 Karen Kingsbury
 Laura Knight
 Renata Kotowska
 Patricial LaFlesch
 J. E. Laufer
 Lee and Low*
 Jacqueline Leigh
 Library Tales*
 Larry Lindberg

Barry Lyga
 Mercer Mayer
 Jody Mays
 Lisa McMann
 Matt McMann
 Shannon Messenger
 Vincent Miceli
 Michael Murphy
 One Monkey Books Publishing*
 Louisa Onome
 Roxanne Orgill
 Penguin Random House*
 Helen Perelman
 Jessie Raspler
 Barbara Renner
 Sonya Reyes
 Jewel Rhodes
 Richard C Woens Publisher*
 Shaunna Robinson
 Root Literacy*
 Charlotte Sherman
 Simon and Schuster*
 Kate Simpson
 Linda Singleton
 STEM Jump*
 Francis Stork
 Sophie Taylor
 Jerome Tiller
 Juliete Tresgallo
 Denise Turney
 Wendelin Van Draanen
 Leslie Vedder
 Luke Villermin
 David Harten Watson
 J.L. Witterick
 * Publishing companies/ founda-
 tions



Kids Need to Read Contributors 2024-2025

Fiscal April 1, 2024-March 31, 2025

Volunteer Groups, Teen Leadership & Campaign Creators

Volunteer Groups

Volunteer groups play a vital role in supporting Kids Need to Read's mission. From sorting and packing books to assisting with community literacy events, these dedicated individuals help extend our reach and impact. Whether they're dressing up for *Storybook Adventures*, helping children spin the *Wheel of Literacy*, or preparing shipments for schools and libraries, our volunteers bring energy, creativity, and heart to every task—making it possible for more children to discover the joy of reading.

501st Dune Sea Garrison
Arizona Ghostbusters
Bank of America
Blue Ribbon Army
Justice League Arizona
Liberty Mutual (Liberty Serves Day)
Meadows Ward Young Women of the
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
Phoenix Fan Fusion Volunteers
Shonare Vhekadla Clan and Community of Mandalorians



Campaign Creators

Peer-to-peer campaign creators are an essential part of Kids Need to Read's community of supporters. These individuals launch personalized fundraising campaigns to celebrate meaningful moments—such as birthdays—or to honor the memory of a loved one who cherished reading. By inviting friends and family to give in lieu of gifts or in remembrance, they help extend the gift of literacy to children in need, turning personal milestones into lasting impact.

501st Dune Sea Garrison and Star Wars Clubs
ASU English Department
Tyson Breinholt and Family
Bruce Matsunaga
Memorial Campaigns
McCarthy Building Companies, Inc.
Gary and Tina Mlodzik
Jessica Payne
Upfront Planning and entitlements



Youth-led Giving & Service

Youth-led giving is an inspiring and growing part of Kids Need to Read's impact. Young people are stepping up to support literacy through book drives, fundraisers, and peer-to-peer campaigns, showing that age is no barrier to making a difference. By using their voices and creativity, teen leaders help raise awareness, collect resources, and spread the joy of reading to children who need it most—proving that the next generation is already leading the way in creating change.

DECA—Mesa
Isabelle Green -Scouts of America
Farrah Rosenman—J-Teen
Help Humanity Today
Theater Club— Corona Del Sol High School
National Charity League of Phoenix



2024-2025 Young Hands, Big Impact: A Youth-Led Mission for Literacy



Using a Love of Reading to Make a Difference Beyond My Own Backyard

By I. Green

Since I was a small child, I've always been an enthusiastic reader, with parents who had the desire and resources to fully support my education. Books were and are a key part of how I've learned about and conceptualized the world, and I was profoundly lucky to grow up in a house surrounded by books of every kind. It's not an exaggeration to say that the free access to literature I had as a child molded me into the person I am today. Every prospective Eagle Scout has to organize and execute a service project for their community, so when I reached that stage in my Scouting career, I decided to pay forward in some small part the gift that reading gave me as a child. Kids Need To Read stood out to me as an organization that helped less privileged children across the country access reading and writing; I was impressed both with the scope and the approach that they took to literacy, ensuring that books are not a chore but a choice. *My local school district has been a recipient of books from KNTR on several occasions, so my project would be helping both my neighborhood and a wider community.*

My actual project had three parts: a book drive through Barnes and Noble, a donation collection through Half Price Books, and a fundraiser outside our local grocery store. The book drive was organized within Barnes and Noble for the Saturday after Thanksgiving, when most of my town was doing their Christmas shopping. I set up a table just inside the door, greeting customers and handing out flyers with a book drive code on them. Once this code was taken to the register, Barnes and Noble donated a percentage of their purchases to KNTR free of any cost to the consumer. We also had a donation box for people who wanted to donate books or money directly. We raised several hundred dollars and several dozen new books over eight hours, the money from which I took to various secondhand bookstores to purchase more material. Half Price Books in Lynnwood was invaluable in this regard; they very generously donated a dozen boxes of their stock to my project in addition to the books I bought from them. The fundraiser at the grocery store was in the first week of December and raised cash, which was originally planned for bulk shipping; since I live in Seattle, transporting the books to Mesa would not have been cheap. Later in the process, I found that one of the leaders in my Scout troop worked for a business that regularly ships machinery in bulk; his company was willing to ship the books to Mesa for free, so the money originally intended for mail fees went to purchasing more books. I also held a sorting day at my house where my troop came over to unpack the books, sort them by grade level, tally them all, and repack them in their proper categories. *Overall, my group raised 2,300 books with a value totaling just over \$25,000.*



While my project won't fix the issue of childhood literacy in America, I am proud that I managed to help even a few other children access the joy I found in reading. This project involved multiple sets of event planning, and I couldn't have done it without the help I received from my family, my local Barnes and Noble manager, the staff of Half Price Books, and, of course, the rest of my Scout troop. I refer to most of the events of the project in the first person here, but it was truly a team effort and everyone who supported me along the way deserves credit for their part. I hope that KNTR continues its mission for as many more years as it is needed and that one day growing up with a library is not considered a remarkable experience.

Storybook Adventures 2024-2025

Storybook Adventures opens the door for every child to imagine, explore, and begin dreaming about their own bright future. In 2024–2025, the program continues to grow—bringing joy, creativity, and meaningful literacy experiences to children who need them most. Some highlights from *Storybook Adventures* in 2024–2025 include:

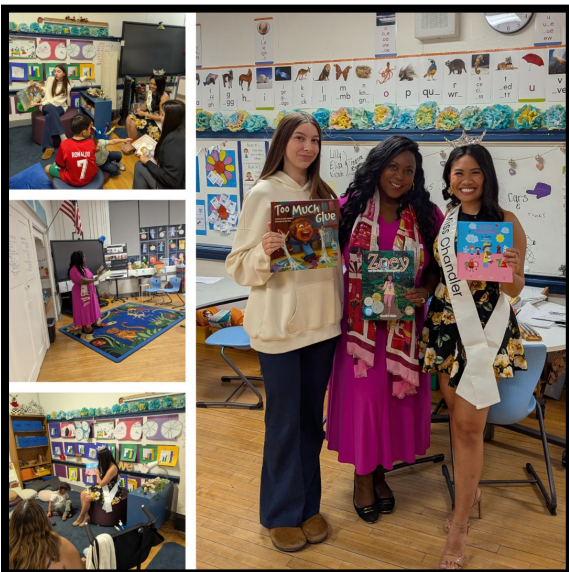


Book'em:

For the second year in a row, Kids Need to Read partnered with the Native American Fatherhood and Families Association and Arizona LEOS to present *Book'em*—a monthly reading initiative led by volunteer officers from the Mesa Police Department. Officers from various divisions visited local neighborhoods to read stories aloud to toddlers and Pre-K children, building positive connections through books and storytelling. Each child received a book of their choice and a *Highlights High Five* magazine to take home, sparking early literacy and a love of reading.

A Renaissance Pastime

The Arizona Renaissance Festival is bringing extra magic to *Storybook Adventures* during the 2024–2025 year, with characters from all walks of Renaissance life joining in to delight young readers. From the glamorous royalty of Lord Charles to the hilariously unpredictable Shenanigans, children are captivated by these larger-than-life guests. Their storytelling brings books to life in unforgettable ways, sparking laughter, curiosity, and a lasting love of reading.



A Real Live Author!

Kids Need to Read loves the support received by local children's book authors. The wonder of meeting someone who actually writes for a living widens the horizons of all the children who meet our storytelling authors.

Storybook Adventures

2024-2025

A special thank you to our reading volunteers among whom participants of the Miss America Pageant, Mesa Police officers, Arizona Renaissance Festival actors, and cosplay groups who give their time to bring magic to Storybook Adventures. Thank you as well to authors Ebonie Fields, John Janezic, Judy Laufer and Tiffany Ellington who always make time to come to events and read their books.

Schools and libraries served with events included:

- Abraham Lincoln Traditional School
- Acacia Elementary
- Adams Elementary
- Alta Vista Elementary
- Apache Junction Public Library
- Arizona Childrens Association
- Arroyo Elementary School
- Cactus Wren
- Chaparral Elementary
- Desert View Elementary
- Eisenhower Center for Innovation
- Indian Oasis Primary
- Ironwood Elementary School
- John Jacobs Elementary
- Lakeview Elementary
- Longfellow Elementary
- Lookout Mountain Elementary
- Manzanita Elementary
- Maryland Elementary
- Mesa Public Library
- Moon Mountain Elementary
- Mountain View School
- Native American Fatherhood and Families Association
- Ocotillo Elementary
- Orangewood Elementary
- Richard E Miller school
- Roadrunner Elementary
- Saguaro Elementary School
- Sanborn Elementary
- San Gabriel Education Foundation
- Shaw Butte Elementary
- Sunburst Elementary
- Sunnyslope Elementary
- Sweetwater Elementary
- Tumbleweed Elementary School
- Washington Elementary
- Valley of the Sun YMCA Ahwatukee

“The students were very engaged in listening to the stories. Live reading is a lot different from a you tube video or other video”

-Wendy Abbott, Summer School Coordinator, Ocotillo Elementary School, Phoenix AZ



Event Participation 2024-2025

Bring a Book– Take a Book! Family literacy nights! STEM nights! Fall carnivals! Parent meetings! Community events! Food bank events! Holiday events! What fantastic opportunities to inspire children and families to read. Kids Need to Read served children as a part of 53 community and school events in 16 different cities in 2023-2024.

The “Wheel of Literacy” continues to remain a staple of our community events. Designed to excite children with the prospect of winning at reading, children spin the wheel for an opportunity to win something extra to take on their reading adventures. Prizes include reading buddies, small bags of reading swag, and additional reading related resources and small books.



- A Mighty Change of Heart
- Adams Elementary School
- Apache Junction Public Library
- Arizona Renaissance Festival
- AZ Leo's - Shop with a Cop
- Brinton Elementary School
- Brunson Lee Elementary
- Chandler Parks and Rec: Dragonfly & Butterfly Bash
- Community Event: I Love Mesa Day
- Eisenhower Center for Innovation
- Escalante Multi Generation Center
- First Things First
- Franklin Accelerated Academy
- Grassrootz Bookstore
- Harris Elementary
- Hohokam Elementary School
- Ida B Redbird Elementary
- Mendoza Elementary School
- Mesa Book Festival
- Mesa Chamber of Commerce
- Mesa Public Library (Several Events)
- Mesa Public Schools District
- Mosley Middle School
- Native Health
- Northwest Christian Schools
- Office of the Pinal County Attorney (Several Events)
- Palomino Primary School
- Phoenix Fan Fusion
- Porter Elementary
- Run Your Race: Chocolate Bunny
- Sanborn Elementary
- Slope Fest Community Event
- St Thomas the apostle school
- Stevenson Elementary
- Tucson Comic Con
- Tucson Festival of books
- Valley of the Sun YMCA: Phoenix
- Vista College Prep – Maryvale
- Who I Am Foundation



“It is such a joy to watch children be able to pick out a book they want to read, that they get to keep, and the happiness that is spread by getting a book of their own.” Kathy Ray, Principal, Porter Elementary, Mesa, Arizona



A Story of Shared Mission: Kids Need to Read and Highlights

by Jessica Payne

Since before 2019, Highlights for Children has been a cornerstone supporter of Kids Need to Read's mission to improve literacy access for underserved children. Through their generous donations of Highlights magazines and activity books, they have helped us create unforgettable reading experiences for children across the nation—and now, for the first time in over five years, in Puerto Rico as well.

Highlights materials are not just books—they are tools of imagination, learning, and joy. These treasured items play a key role in three of our most active programs: The Page Coach, From Our Shelves to Yours, and Share Our Libraries (formerly Grow Your Library). Whether it's giving kids something engaging to read during summer, sparking delight at community events, or rewarding curious minds through our interactive Wheel of Literacy, Highlights is always part of the magic.

You'll find Highlights products in nearly every corner of our outreach. They're a sought-after prize at our literacy carnivals, a staple of our library giveaways, and a treasured resource at our lively Storybook Adventures. They reach not only schools and libraries but also shelters, tribal agencies, food banks, and other organizations dedicated to supporting children in vulnerable circumstances.



"Kids Need to Read is an amazing program that I have had the privilege of partnering with. [The staff] provided amazing 'ocean'-themed books for the kids and did an amazing job at not only reading but singing & dancing too! Not to mention, they donated high-quality books for our community library and Highlights puzzle books for kids."

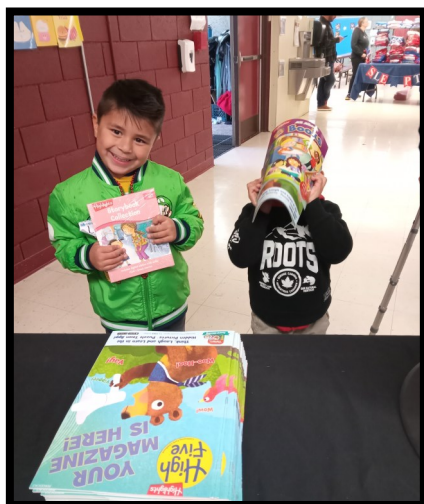
— Alex Kenzler, Resident Services Specialist, Catholic Charities Community Services, Tempe, Arizona

"My kids loved some of the newer books, but ESPECIALLY the Highlights books! It lets them be creative, think critically, and read, all while having fun! It was challenging to read and yet was still fun and simple enough for them to understand — bonus that it had photos and games!"

— Anna Vo, Teacher, Wallace Stegner Academy, Salt Lake City, Utah

Since the 2019–2020 fiscal year, Kids Need to Read has distributed 770,913 books, magazines, activity products, and reading resources—a monumental achievement made possible in part by our ongoing partnership with Highlights.

Together, we are helping kids read, dream, and discover who they are—and who they can become.



The Heartbeat of Our Mission:

The Importance of Volunteers

The success of Kids Need to Read is a testament to the power of a shared mission, and at the core of our resilience are our dedicated volunteers. While it's easy to focus on the tangible results—the books placed in the hands of children—it's the tireless effort of our volunteers that makes it all possible. They are the true architects of our impact, extending our reach far beyond what our small staff could ever achieve.



A Diverse and Dynamic Force

Our volunteers are not a monolithic group; they are a diverse and dynamic force. They come from all walks of life, from different ages and stages, each bringing a unique set of skills and a passion for literacy. We see them at our events, sparking joy with every storybook adventure. We find them meticulously sorting books and preparing special projects at the warehouse, turning a chaotic pile into a beacon of hope for a child. Some even use their creative talents to craft beautiful, handmade reading buddies, which become treasured companions for young readers. Others take the initiative to run their own book drives, mobilizing their communities to join our cause. This network of support is the engine that drives us forward.

The Rising Tide of Youth Philanthropy

One of the most inspiring trends we've seen is the growing involvement of young philanthropists. These enterprising students and young adults are not just donating their time; they're also contributing books and fresh ideas, often from hundreds of miles away. Their commitment reminds us that the love of reading and the desire to help others transcend geographical boundaries. They represent the next generation of changemakers, proving that age is no barrier to making a significant impact. Their youthful energy and passion are a powerful reminder of why our work is so crucial.

Ultimately, Kids Need to Read is more than just an organization that provides books. It is a community built on the generosity of people who believe in the power of literacy. To every volunteer who has given their time, talent, and energy, we offer our deepest gratitude. You are the heartbeat of our mission, and without you, the magic would simply not be possible.



Phoenix Fan Fusion



Phoenix Fan Fusion is the most important event on our calendar, and the 2024 gathering was a huge success. Thanks to the incredible dedication of everyone involved, we raised over \$14,000 to support our mission of getting books into the hands of children. We're so grateful for the community's amazing generosity.

We want to give a special shout-out to the partners who made this possible. We extend our deepest gratitude to **Square Egg Entertainment** for choosing Kids Need to Read as the designated charity for Phoenix Fan Fusion. Your unwavering support allows us to host popular events like Drinks with Authors, which connects community members with their favorite storytellers and illustrators. It's an integral part of the magic that makes Fan Fusion so special.

Thank you to **Randall L. DeVault of Lupin Entertainment** for his incredible effort in organizing the Charity Poker Tournament, which successfully raised \$5,500 for our cause. The players, dealers, and organizers created an atmosphere of fun and friendly competition, all for the benefit of young readers.

We also offer a heartfelt thank you to the cosplay groups who brought our mission to life. **Medieval Times, Star Wars Clubs, Arizona Ghostbusters, Local Authors and the Arizona Renaissance Festival** all generously gave their time and talent. Their participation in our nine Storybook Adventures sessions brought the magic of reading to life and created joyful, unforgettable memories for countless kids. Seeing these beloved characters interact with children and inspire a love for books is what it's all about.

We're incredibly grateful for the independent fundraising efforts of The **501st Dune Sea Garrison**. Their Blast a Trooper booth alone raised over \$1,700! Thank you to everyone who took a Nerf dart for a good cause and helped create such a unique and memorable experience.

Finally, a massive thank you to all the volunteers who worked so hard at Phoenix Fan Fusion. Whether you were greeting attendees at our booth, helping with activities, or simply sharing our story, your dedication and effort are what made the event a remarkable success for Kids Need to Read. We truly couldn't have done it without you. Together, we made a real difference in the lives of children.





2024-2025 The Page Coach

Impossible to Choose Just One

In a year full of adventures, new friends, and new ideas, it is impossible to pick just one story to highlight. Whether it is meeting the literary needs of a rural community, or providing books to support and encourage teachers and their students, or celebrating family literacy with a fun story time and book giveaway, the Page Coach will continue its appealing approach to helping children discover the JOY of reading and the POWER of a literate mind!



Bring a Book- Take a Book ... Trading for new books

Our Page Coach initiative's "Bring a Book—Take a Book" program is designed to get the community engaged with reading. Hosted at public libraries, it encourages people to trade books, allowing them to freshen up their home collections and empower children to discover new genres and expand their reading habits.



Supporting those that teach literacy!

It's well-documented that teachers often spend hundreds of dollars of their own money on classroom resources each year. To help alleviate this financial burden, Kids Need to Read partnered with Mesa Public Schools at their New Teacher Professional Development day.

The excitement was contagious as they filled bags with books to build classroom libraries for their students. In total, we gave away 3,678 books and reading resources, representing an incredible donation of \$32,221.25 in educational materials. By providing these essential tools, we hope to empower these new teachers to inspire a love of reading in their students from day one.



Shop with a Cop

Our partnership with AZ Leos and the National Charity League of Phoenix for Shop with a Cop was a huge success, thanks in large part to our teen volunteers. They went above and beyond, not only distributing books to the children but also providing free gift wrapping. This thoughtful gesture ensured that the gifts the kids chose for their families—with money they received for the event—remained a festive surprise, making the experience even more memorable.

2024-2025 The Page Coach



Empowering Young Readers: Our FY 2024-2025 Impact

When people say children don't read anymore, they often overlook a critical factor: access. At Kids Need to Read, we know that when children have books, they will read. Our mission is to bridge gaps in literacy and provide crucial support where it's needed most. We help libraries facing budget cuts, assist teachers who spend their own money on classroom resources, and empower families who are determined to guide their children to success, no matter their financial situation.

The Page Coach: Bringing Books to Life

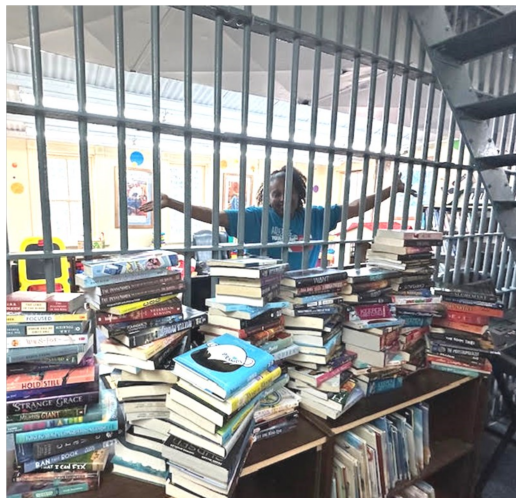
Our mobile outreach unit, The Page Coach, is a literary treasure chest on wheels. In the fiscal year 2024-2025 (April 1, 2024–March 31, 2025), The Page Coach proudly served 71,899 unique children, distributing inspiring books and literacy programming at a diverse array of schools, libraries, and events in low-socioeconomic communities across Arizona and California. We provided a total of 91,680 books and reading resources, valued at an incredible \$647,509.00. The average poverty rate of the communities we served was 84%.

To measure our impact, we sent surveys to the agencies we visited. These surveys are designed to gauge whether our interactive presentations and book giveaways sparked a greater desire to read. Of the 61 Page Coach survey respondents, an impressive 56% reported observing an increased desire to read after our program.



Many of our partners shared positive feedback, like this:

- ◇ The books help build a library for some of our families who do not have books in their home. Being a nonprofit our program promotes literacy and is part of every visit we do with the families. It is nice to receive new books to give to these families once a month. The donation helps tremendously because we usually do not have much in the budget to buy books ourselves. The Page Coach has been part of building that library in home of our families for several years now and we so appreciate the partnership. They have also come out to some of our social events in the past to read to the kiddos. They do a great job reading to kids and always include the kids. We love them:) - Denise Huddleston , Child & Family Resources , Apache Junction and Yuma Area
- ◇ This program was such a blessing to our students! They were so excited to receive new books and have such wonderful titles to choose from. Many of our students do not have books at home and don't regularly visit the library during the summer. Receiving these books ensures that they have the opportunity to read over summer vacation. Thank you so much! -Amanda Chamberlain, Cartwright/St. Vincent de Paul, Phoenix
- ◇ This lit such fire to read in so many students, they were so proud to write their names in the books and to show them off at home. A few of our students even said, "This is my first book I ever owned." It brought tears to my eyes. Thank you so much for the books, you helped us begin this year with a bang! -Kelli Luck, Bonillas Traditional Elementary Magnet School, Tucson



Pictured is the excited librarian from Noxubee County Public Library, MS. These books were used to support reading outreach programs

Share Our Libraries is Kids Need to Read's program focused on strengthening and revitalizing library collections for children who need them most. Launched as the successor to our Grow Your Library program—which was designed and run by longtime supporters Gary and Tina Mlodzik and retired in early 2024—Share Our Libraries builds on a strong foundation while expanding our ability to meet evolving literacy needs and reinforcing libraries as a cornerstone of literacy connection within communities.

Through this program, we partner with underfunded libraries serving low-income and under-resourced populations to ensure their shelves reflect the interests, needs, and future goals of today's readers. Share Our Libraries emphasizes high-interest, high-quality books—particularly in areas such as STEAM, career exploration, financial literacy, and social-emotional learning—so children have access to relevant, engaging materials that inspire curiosity and a lifelong love of reading.

In the 2024–2025 year, Share Our Libraries supported five libraries across five states—Mississippi, Maine, Alabama, Arizona, and Wisconsin. Together, these libraries received 1,580 books, serving communities where the average poverty rate was 75% below the federal poverty line. The donated books were used to refresh library collections, support reading program incentives, and strengthen community outreach efforts, directly expanding access to books for children and families most in need.



A growing component of Share Our Libraries is our Reading Is a Life Skill initiative. This initiative focuses on increasing access to high-quality nonfiction books related to STEAM, financial literacy, and career exploration—categories that are often the most expensive and difficult for libraries to keep current. Looking ahead, Kids Need to Read plans to partner with libraries to host financial literacy events, feature authors and subject-matter experts, and significantly expand our investment in this critical area to better prepare children for future success.

In addition, Share Our Libraries supports a new initiative called Page Turners, created and led by Kids Need to Read Advisory Council member Tiffany Ellington, the current Miss Arizona. Page Turners connects youth leaders with their local libraries and empowers them to create and run their own literacy events. By fostering youth leadership and community engagement, the initiative helps cultivate the next generation of literacy advocates while expanding access to books in meaningful, locally driven ways.





2024-2025 From Our Shelves to Yours

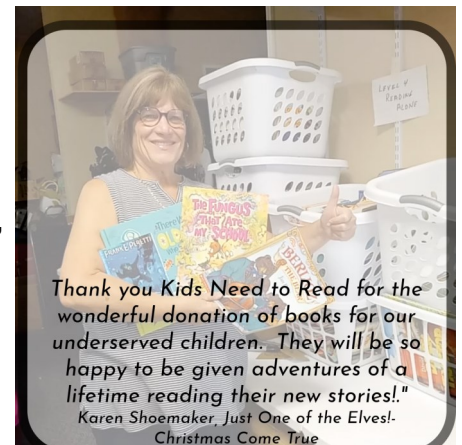
How a Box of Books Makes a Big Difference By Jessica Payne



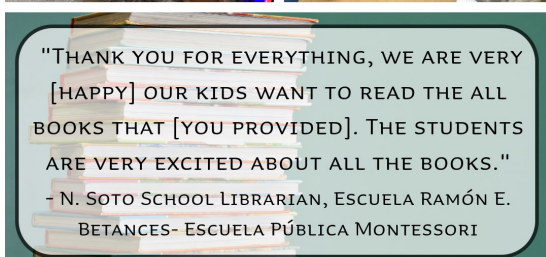
A few years ago, Kids Need to Read delivered books to what I had only read about: a true book desert. This small town in Eastern Arizona had no grocery stores, malls, or big-box chains. The nearest place to buy a newspaper was over an hour away. Yet the community's hunger for books was enormous. Residents were transforming an abandoned church school into the town's first library—a moment that left an indelible mark on me and continues to fuel our mission.

Unfortunately, many communities across the country still face limited access to books. Abandoned libraries, crumbling school resources, and empty shelves remain too common. Fortunately, for every under-resourced shelf, there are teachers, librarians, and service organizations working to put books into children's hands.

That is the mission of From Our Shelves to Yours, Kids Need to Read's program delivering books directly to children who need them most. In 2024–2025, the program reached 7,216 children across 27 states and Puerto Rico, including Maine, Michigan, Texas, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Missouri, Massachusetts, Arizona, California, Oregon, Alaska, Ohio, New Jersey, Connecticut, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Hawaii, South Dakota, Illinois, Minnesota, and Puerto Rico.



During the year, 7,326 books—valued at \$48,645—were distributed to communities with an average poverty rate of 84%. Books were sent to schools, libraries, community nonprofits, and government agencies, and were used to refresh library collections, support tutoring programs, reward student achievements, and provide comfort and enrichment for children in need.



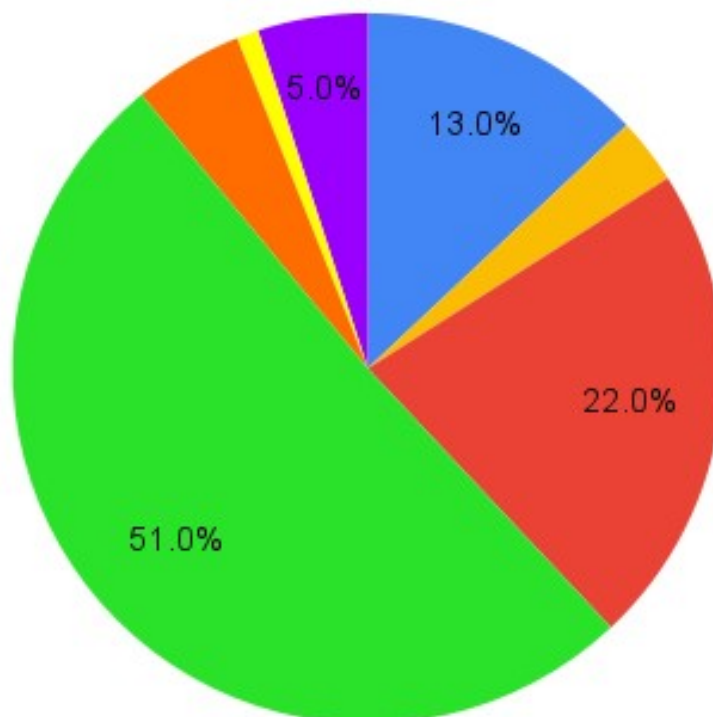
One box of books can become a classroom library, fuel a summer reading program, or serve as a reward for a child's success. One box can make a lasting difference. That's why Kids Need to Read will continue to send books from our shelves to theirs, inspiring literacy and opening doors of opportunity for children nationwide.



Literacy Programs served in 2024-2025

Kids Need to Read provided reading resources to 162 literacy programs across 27 states and Puerto Rico during 2024–2025. Together, these programs received a total of 201,918 books and other reading resources, valued at \$1,431,128. Approximately 84% of the 162,136 unique children served lived at or below the poverty level. The chart below represents the average breakdown of racial and ethnic demographics of children served:

Demographics Served 2024-2025



ALABAMA

Anniston Middle School
Woodville Public Library

ALASKA

Central Middle School

ARIZONA

A Mighty Change of Heart
Abraham Lincoln Traditional

School

Acacia Elementary School
Adams Elementary: Headstart
Adams Elementary
Alta Vista Elementary
Altrusa of the West Valley
Anderson Jr High
Apache Junction Public Library
Arizona Child and Adolescent
Survivor Initiative Family

Violence Center: School of social work

Arizona Children's Association
Arizona Leos
Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind
Arroyo Elementary School
Assistance League of Phoenix
Azura Literacy

ARIZONA continued

AZCend
 Bonillas Traditional Elementary School
 Brinton Elementary
 Brunson Lee Elementary
 Cactus Wren Elementary
 Cartwright School District
 Catholic Charities Community Services
 Chandler Parks and Rec
 Chaparral Elementary School
 Child and Family Resources
 Child and Family Resources
 Child and Family Resources
 Child and Family Resources
 Community Bridges
 Desert View Elementary
 Dig It Kingman Community Garden
 Control Alt Delete
 Eisenhower Center for Innovation
 Escalante Multi Generation Center
 Faith Christian Center
 Family Resource Center Mesa
 First Things First
 Foothills Food Bank
 Franklin Accelerated Academy
 Franklin Phonetic School
 Gadsden Elementary School
 Gathering Humanity
 Grassrootz Bookstore
 Harris Elementary
 Hohokam Elementary School
 Ida B Redbird Elementary
 Indian Oasis Primary
 Ironwood Elementary School
 John Jacobs Elementary
 Joseph Zito Elementary
 Kingman High School
 Lakeview Elementary School
 Littlefield Unified School District #9
 Lookout Mountain Elementary
 Longfellow
 Manzanita Elementary
 Maricopa County Sheriffs Office
 Maryland Elementary
 Mendoza Elementary School
 PTO
 Mesa Arts Academy
 Mesa Chamber Of Commerce

EVT
 MesakReady
 Mesa Parks and Rec
 Mesa Public Library
 Mesa Public Schools District
 Moon Mountain Elementary
 Mosley Middle School
 Mountain View School
 Native American Community Health Center (Native Health)
 Native American Fatherhood and Families Association
 Nogales Public Library
 Northwest Christian Schools
 Ocotillo Elementary
 Ocotillo Elementary Head Start
 Office of Pinal County Attorney
 Operation Homefront
 Orangewood Elementary
 Palomino Primary School
 Pan American Charter School
 Peoria Prep Academy
 Phi Beta Phi- Tucson Festival of books
 Picacho School
 Pinal County United Way
 Porter Elementary School
 Project Sleep Tight
 Roadrunner Elementary School
 Richard E Miller School
 St Thomas the apostle school
 St Vincent De Paul Catholic school
 Saguaro Elementary
 San Marcos Elementary
 Sanborn Elementary
 Shaw Butte Elementary
 Shumway Leadership Academy
 Sirrine Montessori Center
 Slope Fest Community Event
 Steele Children's Research Center
 Stevenson Elementary
 Streets of Joy
 Sunburst Elementary
 Sunnyslope Elementary
 Sun Vallery Academy
 Sweetwater School
 Tucson Comic Con
 Tumbleweed Elementary School
 Valley of the Sun YMCA
 Vista College Prep – Maryvale
 Vista Grove Preparatory

Academy
 Washington elementary school
 Washington Elementary School District
 West Phoenix School
 Whitter Elementary School
 Whitter Elementary School
 Who I am Foundation
 Workplace Education and Literacy Coalition of Mohave County
 Yuma School District #1

CALIFORNIA

Mojave River Academy
 San Gabriel Education Foundation
 Gerald Ford Elementary
 Oliphant Elementary
 Shadow Hills High School
 Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary School

CONNEICUT

Bassick High School

FLORIDA

Christmas Comes True

HAWAII

Prince David Kawananaoka Middle School

ILLINOIS

United Way of South Central Illinois

INDIANA

Community Kitchen

LOUISIANA

United Way of Central Louisiana

MAINE

Heartland Public Library
 Alfond Youth and Community Center

MASSACHUSETTS

Giving Back Together
 Up With Books

MICHIGAN
Comstock Middle School

MINNESOTA
Stride Academy

MISSISSIPPI
Noxubee County Library

MISSOURI
North Side Community School

NEW JERSEY
Bound Brook BOE

NEW MEXICO
Read to Me: ABQ Network
Los Padilla Elementary
Joy Junction
East San Jose Elementary
New Mexico PTA

NORTH CAROLINA
Snake, Rabbit and Snail Book
Mobile

H.H. Beam Elementary
Albemarle High School

OHIO
Inspiring Minds

OREGON
Hillsboro School District
Hillsboro Online Academy

PENNSYLVANIA
Giving Back Together
Up With Books

PENNSYLVANIA
Ephrata Area Education
Foundation

SOUTH DAKOTA
Little Wound Middle School

TEXAS
Idea Bluff Springs Academy
Charles Rice Learning Center

Berlanga ES Corpus Christi ISD

WISCONSIN
Humane Society of Sheboygan
County
CESA-3
Brewer Public Library

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Perry Street Preparatory
School

PUERTO RICO
Ramon Emeterio Betances:
Montessori School

Selected Testimonials

- * We were given a box with several bilingual picture books and half a dozen Spanish middle grade novels, along with about 20 English novels. The students were so excited! We have mostly bilingual students, and some Spanish-only families and they were all so grateful to pick out a book to take home and read. I just unpacked the box late yesterday, and most of these books have already found their way into the hands and homes of some very happy readers. We're a school that struggles with getting our students reading at grade level, and honestly this donation is making exponential waves in getting kids to want to read. The Spanish novels we got were all "I Survived" novels, and the kids, both English and Spanish speaking love them! My Spanish speaking kids were intrigued, and my English speaking students were indirectly hyping the books up so much. It was Christmas come early! Thank you so much for all that you're doing! - *Vanessa Zamorano, Translator and Family Engagement Specialist, Mojave River Academy, Colton, CA*
- * All of the students and the staff at the school were very grateful for your donations. Thank you for everything, we are very happy because our kids want to read the books that your organization kindly donated. The students are very excited with all the books. -*Noemi Soto, Librarian, Ramon E. Betances (Montessori), Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico*
- * The books help build a library for some of our families who do not have books in their home. Being a nonprofit our program promotes literacy and is part of every visit we do with the families. It is nice to receive new books to give to these families once a month. The donation helps tremendously because we usually do not have much in the budget to buy books ourselves. The Page Coach has been part of building that library in home of our families for several years now and we so appreciate the partnership. They have also come out to some of our social events in the past to read to the kiddos. They do a great job reading to kids and always include the kids. We love them:) -*Denise Huddleston, Program Director In home Visitation, Child & Family Resources, Apache Junction and Yuma, Arizona*
- * This lit such fire to read in so many students, they were so proud to write their names in the books and to show them off at home. A few of our students even said, "This is my first book I ever owned." It brought tears to my eyes. Thank you so much for the books, you helped us begin this year with a bang! -*Kelli Luck, Library Assistant, Bonillas Traditional Elementary Magnet School, Tucson Arizona*

Kids Need to Read

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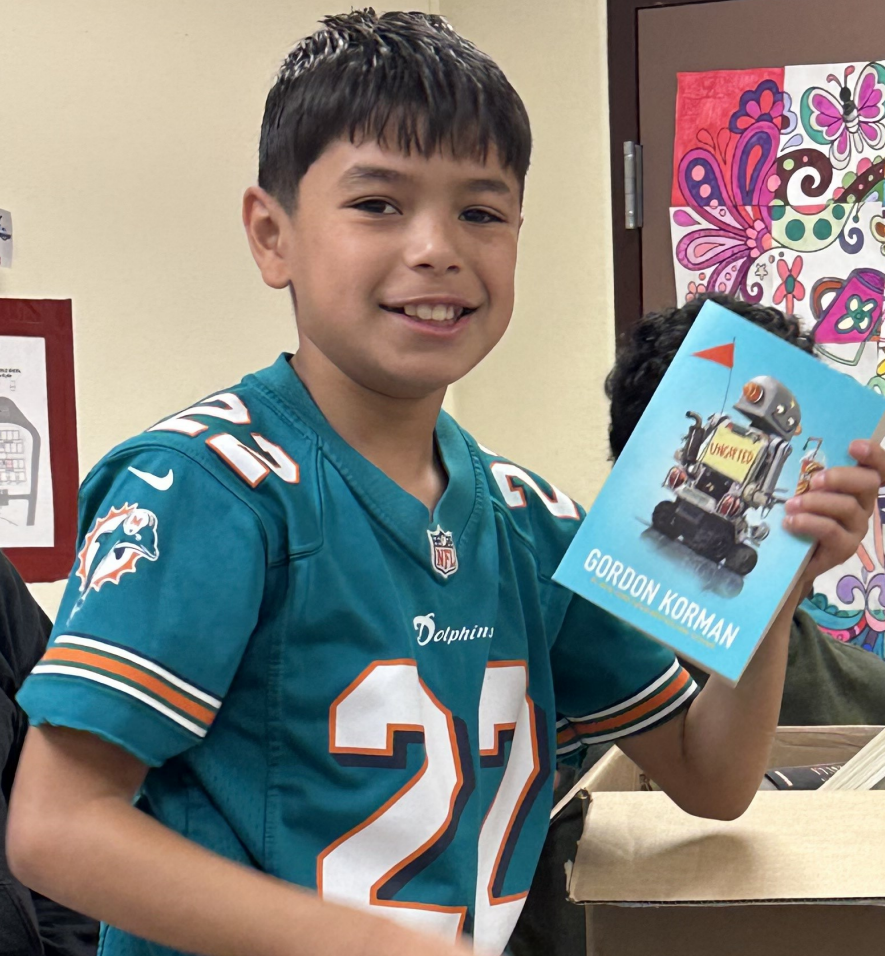
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KIDS NEED TO READ
Inspiring Imagination

Our Vision:

All children and adolescents will have access to quality books no matter their race, economic status, or capabilities. Further, our organization will provide inspiring programs to increase literacy rates and decrease dropout rates throughout the United States. These programs will be presented in a manner that will foster and uphold dignity and self-respect. We will consistently demonstrate to children and adolescents the need to read, as we believe literacy contributes to school and life success.