



Report to the Community

2014



Table of Contents

2	Mission
3	Executive Summary
4	A Simple Idea with a Wide Reach
6	Birth-2-Five Program
9	International Expansion
11	Community Support
12	Boxing Parties
13	Volunteers
14	Freedom Through Literacy Award
15	Testimonials
16	Contact



Boxers carefully select books during December's Boxing Party.

“I think books are like people, in the sense that they’ll turn up in your life when you most need them.”

- Emma Thompson



Judith's Reading Room was established in 2010 to honor the memory of Judith Krug, a librarian and cousin to the founders. Its mission is to enrich lives and societies by proactively encouraging freedom through literacy.

Executive Summary

Judith's Reading Room began its journey in 2010 by sending books to underserved communities who do not have access to them. In 2014, the organization reached two major milestones: we donated over 100,000 books to date and we surpassed \$1,000,000 in value of books shipped. Accomplishments like these demonstrate how a nimble, grassroots nonprofit with a core group of committed volunteers can make a difference. We believe in the transformative power of literature. This year we initiated Freedom Through Literacy Award to honor those who are on the frontline of literacy. By doing so, we hope to celebrate and encourage global literacy initiatives that promote a love of reading.

2014 Board of Directors

President & Co-Founder

Cathy Leiber

Treasurer & Co-Founder

Scott Leiber

Vice President- International

Linda Wellstein, Esq.

Secretary

Daniel Leiber

Directors

Marissa Ackerman

Chiji Akoma

Carla Border

Erin D'Amelio

Bernadette Lewis

Ana Ramirez Luhrs

A Simple Idea with a Wide Reach

Since 2010,
Judith's Reading Room
has donated:

86 libraries

with

106,264 books

worth

\$1,073,425



“The very existence of libraries affords
the best evidence that we may yet have
hope for the future of man.”

- T.S. Eliot

In 2014, we donated these libraries:

- 4 libraries at PA Boys & Girls Clubs, Philadelphia metro area, 13,000 children
- Khotakpha, Bhutan, 211 children
- USS BATAAN, Virginia, 4,800 Sailors and Marines
- 2 libraries in Sidoarjo, Indonesia, 440 students
- 2 libraries in Yunnan Province, China, 1,350 students
- Magarao Central School, Philippines, 1,400 children
- 5 libraries, Resita City, Romania, 70,000 residents
- Tunica, Mississippi, 20 children

These books will support the "Read by Fourth" program, designed to double the number of kids who read on grade level.

Working with READ Bhutan, we donated 53 audiobooks for blind children.

These donations concluded our partnership with the World Is Just A Book Away (WIJABA). In all, our books have benefitted 8,721 children in Indonesia.

Students in this rural province now have access to books to pass required English curriculum exams.

Children in the poverty-stricken community will be able to increase their reading level, improve their academic ability and develop social skills.

Dedicated on UNESCO's International Literacy Day, these five libraries are used by children and city politicians alike to learn English.

The result of a Peace Corps volunteer's service project, this library will establish a culture of reading for fun and academic improvement.

Birth-2-Five Program



Photo credit: Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley Annual Report

Since 2010, we've donated 17,533 children's books worth \$145,552 that have reached low-income families in Allentown and Bethlehem. Both organizations have on average 68,400 family visits per year.

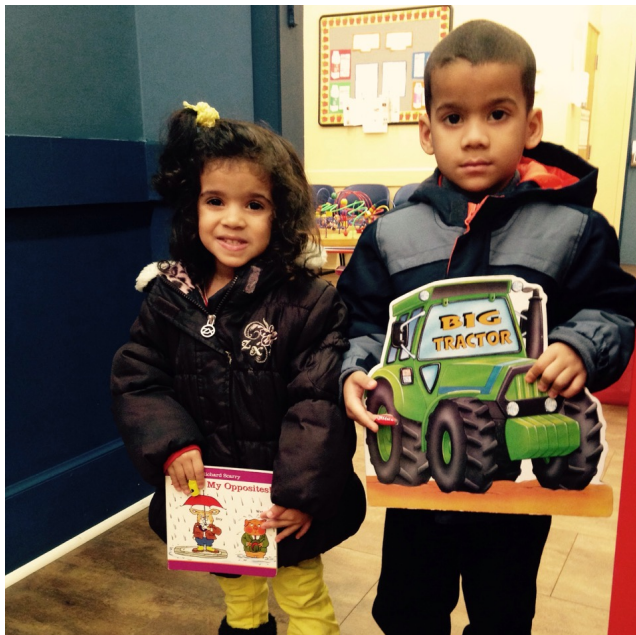
In 2014 we concentrated on getting children's books to these families through our Birth-2-Five Program. In partnership with the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) supplemental nutritional program at Casa Guadalupe and Hispanic Center Lehigh Valley, our Birth-2-Five Program equalizes children's early learning experiences by donating a book at every quarterly visit in exchange for the parents' pledge to read aloud to their child for twenty minutes each day.

Illiteracy is a national threat to education. The Greater Lehigh Valley United Way notes in its 2014-2018 Investment Plan that "students who cannot read proficiently by the end of third grade are four time more likely to not graduate high school." One of the problems stems from the **lack of books in the home, especially in low-income families.**

According to one study, researchers found that children in these households with no access to books knew *30 million less words* than their middle-income counterparts *by the time they started kindergarten*. When they enter school, they already begin disadvantaged, and unfortunately can never catch up.

Dawn Bush, WIC Clinic Coordinator at Casa Guadalupe, recognizes the impact, stating that participation in the program has such robust enthusiasm that families ask for more books after receiving their initial gift during visits.

It is, in effect, turning around the perception that literacy is a challenge. The simplicity of the program is what makes it so special, because the earlier you start introducing books into a child's life, the less reading seems like a struggle. And when reading is less of a struggle, it becomes fun.



Children looking forward to reading their new books.



Children receive their December book gift just in time for the holidays.

“The moms and kids are asking for books at every visit; the kids are asking for books over stickers ... I have many families say if it was not for us and Judith's Reading Room, there would not be books in the home.”

-Dawn Bush, WIC Clinic Coordinator, Casa Guadalupe

Library Highlight: Tunica, Mississippi

In December, we donated a library of 347 books in Tunica, Mississippi, one of the most poverty-stricken towns in the United States. Up until 15 years ago, half of the town lacked running water, and today only 60% of its students graduate high school.

The Reverend Dr. Leoda Topps, pastor at a 139-year-old church and former teacher, wanted to make a difference. She told us that **most children in Tunica don't own books**, and that her hope is to generate a hunger for reading that will inspire these children to stay in school and graduate. Every six weeks, she will engage parents to give feedback, including any improvements in grades, to discover the impact of our book donation.



Dr. Leoda and recipients revel in the book donation.

International Expansion

“One of the children said to me: ‘Teacher, those books take us to special places, exciting places we can dream about.’ She is a poor kid, around 10 years old, who can hardly read in Romanian. But now, she comes to the library and spends hours reading your books.”

- Dominique Zară, librarian

As the world continues to develop into a more complex global community, the need for international peace and understanding becomes crucial. We firmly believe that books optimize the chance to bridge cultures and their peoples with the ability to educate through vicarious experiences. We proudly partner with American and local teachers and librarians to help their students, who crave knowledge of English. Books help bring students out of isolation and integrate them into the growing global economy.

“We understand that the role of a library is not only to provide books or IT services, but to help the community,” said Dominique Zară, librarian with the Municipal Library of Resita City in Romania. In September, Judith’s Reading Room shipped nearly 1,300 books to stock the shelves of five libraries serving 70,000 residents. Zară said, “We want to teach the Roma children to read and talk in English in order to be able to handle life and to find a job anywhere in the world.”



Children show off books from the Judith’s Reading Room donation.

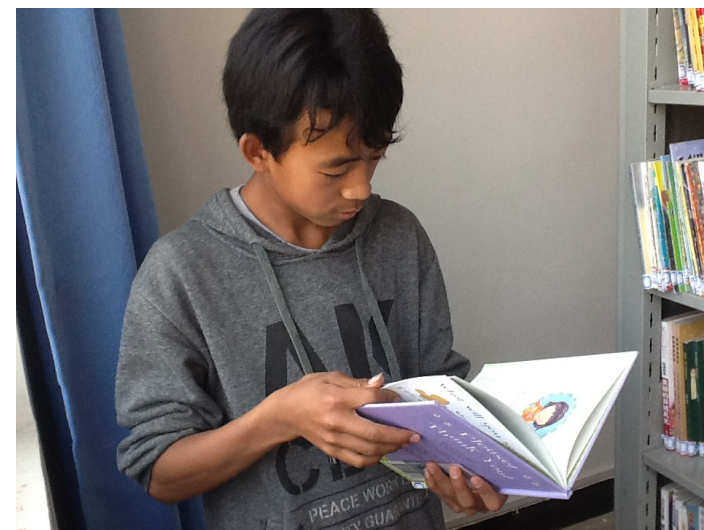
Two Libraries in Yunnan Province, China

This year, we worked with two Teach for China Fellows to impact their students in rural China. Frances Deram first sought our help back in 2013; in June of this year, the library of 418 books at Dachaoshan Elementary School in Yunnan Province, China, was officially dedicated. The school serves 600 children that are too poor to afford books. She recalls how the library inspired one of her students:

“What is surprising and welcoming is the moment when a student, of whose participation is less strong and lacking, finds the courage to walk over and pick up a book. Tony was one such student ...

Determined to push himself to improve his English and through our encouragement, Tony found himself taking home books ... Tony's English improved to become third in his class of over fifty students! My memory of Tony reminds me of the transformative power that books can have when nothing else helps,” said Deram.

The success of this library led Deram to refer Judith's Reading Room to another Teach for China fellow, Diane Ahn, at Mangshui Middle School. Ahn states, “freedom is to have choice, and in the case of rural China, to have choice is to have mobility. Children who grow up in this area are on the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder, and thus only have one means for mobility: education.” Our donation of 219 books serve 750 students.



*Top right: A Dachaoshan student reads through a book.
Bottom right: Students at Mangshui Middle School.*

Community Support



In 2014, we saw an incredible increase in community support for our programs. Publishers and authors, retailers like Talbots and Ten Thousand Villages, and high school students alike all stepped up to the plate to fundraise and collect books for projects like the Birth-2-Five Program. Barnes & Noble also chose us as their Holiday Book Drive charity for the fifth consecutive year.



Top left: Ten Thousand Villages displays a sign for its Judith's Reading Room fundraiser.

Top right: A high school student catalogues the hundreds of books she collected for Judith's Reading Room.

Bottom left: Volunteers read at a sales event at Talbots.



Author Jennifer Murgia selected Judith's Reading Room as the beneficiary during her book signing at Barnes & Noble.

Boxing Parties

Every month for 57 consecutive months, dedicated volunteers come to Judith's Reading Room to celebrate literacy and box books for deployed troops during our Boxing Parties. We like to call our Boxing Parties the heart and soul of our organization for that very reason, as the enthusiasm and heartfelt participation perfectly represent our values.

In 2014, 272 boxers packed up 11,178 books worth a whopping \$123,938 that we shipped to military bases, aircraft carriers, and to VA hospitals.

The United Through Reading program on all naval aircraft carriers gives troops the opportunity to read children's books aloud. They are recorded and the tapes get sent home. This program is the **#1 morale booster** in the Navy. The 1,483 children's books we have sent for this program make it possible for Sailors to stay in touch with their families when they are thousands of miles away.

-12-



Linda Skeley, a Marine mother, prepares to ship books to the USS BATAAN.



Sailors aboard USS CARL VINSON unpack books sent by Boxers.

Volunteers

Volunteer Highlight: Joel Vargas

We first met Joel Vargas, a recent Lafayette College graduate and Fulbright scholar, in 2013 to collaborate on the documentary about our Bi-Coastal Literacy Project.

Our program sought to research the impact of a book club on disempowered teenagers and their interactions with others. The research indicated that the book clubs have encouraged healthy conflict resolution and grew participants' confidence in speaking and in themselves.

Joel is bringing these wonderful facts to life. With his help, we've accumulated hours of motivating footage highlighting the empowerment these youth feel as their confidence in reading grows. The documentary is expected to be completed in 2015.



Aesop once said, “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” We take that philosophy to heart: as an all-volunteer organization, no service is overlooked. Volunteers come in and offer help in many shapes and forms, whether unpacking a recent donation of books, updating our social media, or even administrative work.

This year, 1,493 volunteer visits* resulted in a grand total of 6,321 hours. While we don't want to put a number on the value of our amazing volunteers, according to Federal IRS guidelines at \$22.55, their efforts amounted to \$142,538.55.

Freedom Through Literacy Award

It takes many voices to champion literacy and create a love of reading and learning. This year, we created the first annual Freedom Through Literacy Award to honor individual champions of literacy from all disciplines and from all over the world, be they teachers, librarians, researchers, authors, educators... In a word, anyone who has done exemplary work to instill in others a love of reading. These are individuals taking charge in the fight against illiteracy, whether it is a English teacher abroad implementing innovative reading programs to encourage more students to pick up a book, or an author who has incorporated new techniques into his children's books to make a child want to read just one more story before bed.

The winner, to be announced in May 2015, will receive a top prize of \$5,000, and up to five others will win \$1,000 each.

Testimonials

“I was thrilled as were our sailors with the very carefully and hand picked reads and delighted with the variety. I saw a couple that brought back memories of my own childhood that warmed my heart. From all of us on board the Carl Vinson, thank you!!!” -Schumacher, Ashley
E. RP2 (CVN70) USS CARL VINSON

“Reading is recognized by our group as ‘changing lives.’ Brain injured members who have been brave enough to begin to read again...in little steps...have blossomed into talking, laughing, interacting people. Members - other brain injured and care givers alike - are amazed!” -Janet McIlhenny, Lehigh Valley Brain Trauma Support Group

Captain Christopher Neeley, US Army, told us that while he served as Public Affairs Officer at Camp Phoenix, Kabul, Afghanistan, the children’s books that Boxers had sent between 2010 and 2014 had **saved lives**. “The Camp suffered mortar shellings and bombings. When the boxes of children’s books arrived and the troops decided to hand deliver them to village elders, the shellings and bombings STOPPED.” He said “the Afghan children had never before seen a book” and added that “it did not matter that the children could not understand English: pictures in the storybooks helped parents ‘read’ to their children.” Additionally, the more than 4,000 adult books the organization sent during the same time period, and which created the first-ever war-zone library in Afghanistan, were basically the only “entertainment” the troops enjoyed.

Contact

Contact:

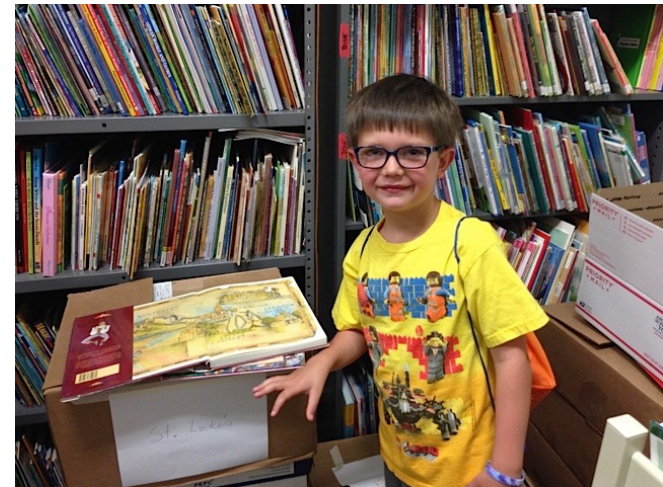
484-661-6151

5 E. 3rd Street
Bethlehem, PA 18015

www.judithsreadingroom.org

facebook.com/JudithsReadingRoom

twitter.com/JReadingRM



One of our younger volunteers, Noah, poses with the books he's chosen to send out during a Boxing Party.

Judith's Reading Room, established in 2010, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization incorporated under the laws of the state of Pennsylvania. Contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law.



“Freedom Through Literacy”