

## Link to Libraries

*Overview: I have been involved with Link to Libraries for nine years, serving as a classroom reader, newsletter editor, event planner, Board member and Chairman of the Board. During my three-year term as Board Chair (2015-2018) I oversaw the search for a first-time paid CEO and President upon the retirement of our founder and the creation of expanded Board documents to support a newly formed working board.*

Link to Libraries was founded in 2008 with two volunteers and a donation of sixty books to one Springfield, Massachusetts public school whose library shelves were sorely in need of books. Today Link to Libraries has donated more than 500,000 new books through four programs reaching over 25,000 underserved children throughout western Massachusetts and northwestern Connecticut. The organization has one paid employee and 200 community volunteers.

Link to Libraries offers businesses and individual youth, teen and adult volunteers the opportunity to support children's literacy for all in our community through volunteerism and financial support through four programs:

### 1. Business Book Link Sponsorship:

The Business Book Link sponsorship program plays a critical role in the effort to dramatically improve a child's chances for success by enhancing language and literacy skills through exposure to books and reading.

The program establishes a three-year partnership between a local business, individual, family or group and a school. Sponsors provide \$1500 per year over the course of a three-year commitment, ensuring that there will be a steady stream of 300-400 new books to that school's library. Additionally, sponsors are offered the opportunity to read aloud in up to two third or fourth grade classrooms once a month and are given new books to give each student for their home libraries at the end of each visit. Currently there are 78 sponsored schools and approximately 22,000 books are donated per year.

### 2. Celebrity Read Aloud:

The Celebrity Read Aloud program is a hallmark of Link to Libraries. State senators, congressman, mayors, sports stars, business leaders, and other community leaders visit third and fourth grade classes. They share with the students a little bit about what they do and then read a book selected by Link to Libraries, emphasizing the importance of reading, learning, and studying. Each student receives a new book for their home library.

### 3. Monthly Read Aloud:

The Monthly Read Aloud program connects volunteer readers with third and fourth grade classrooms throughout the region. Readers are provided literacy training and are given a set of carefully curated books from which to read and enough new paperback books so that every student can choose one to keep and take home at the end of each monthly visit. The program has 200 volunteer readers and distributes approximately 42,000 books per year.

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#### 4. Reading Any Place:

Link to Libraries collaborates with local agencies, schools, and other nonprofit organizations to provide new books and toys to homeless children from birth through grade seven. The program serves approximately 2,900 children and donates 17,500 books each year.

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