



# **MAKING A MARK ON LITERACY**



2008-2009 ANNUAL REPORT

## MAKING A MARK

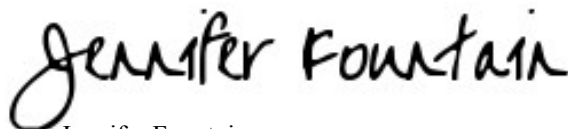
If you are reading this, chances are you recognize the fundamental importance of literacy in everyday life. Chances are you also know how very many people in our community lack that fundamental skill. More than ever in these challenging economic times, adults who need to improve their basic skills are reaching out to Reading Connections to help them make lasting changes in their lives through literacy. Our students have left a lasting mark in our memory as we watch them struggle and triumph in their own lives. There is no more powerful testament to the human spirit than watching a 40-year-old woman learn that she *can* learn, or watching a father learn to read to his children so they can have opportunities he lacked.

Literacy is not just a powerful tool for individuals; it is also a powerful way to make a lasting change on the nature of our community. Every adult who can read is an adult who can fully participate in life. We watched this year as hundreds of our students registered to vote, became U.S. citizens, joined the PTA, found jobs, got a GED, helped prepare their children for school, or went on to higher education. When we think of all that these individuals will be able to contribute to our community, we are truly humbled by their accomplishments.

We want you to know that you have made your mark by supporting Reading Connections and our efforts to improve the quality of life in our community through literacy. This annual report contains a snapshot of our activities for the year. We hope that we can convey to you even a small measure of the pride we feel—and that you, our supporters, can share—at knowing the difference Reading Connections makes in the lives of those who seek our help.



Jennifer Gore  
Executive Director



Jennifer Fountain  
President, Board of Directors

***“We make a living by what we get,  
but we make a life by what we give.”***

*~Winston Churchill*



# BY THE NUMBERS

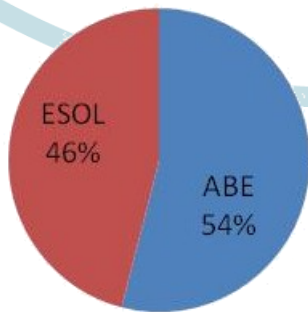
This year Reading Connections served **711 students**, the most students we have served in a single year in our almost 20-year history!

Of our full-time students (those who completed at least 12 hours of instruction and received both a pre- and post-instruction assessment) **38%** advanced a full literacy level, the equivalent of several grade levels!

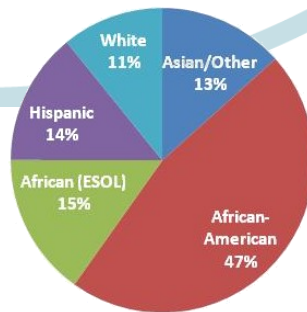
Our students completed over **14,000 hours** of instruction by working with tutors or in small group classes.

Each student sets at least one personal goal such as becoming more involved with their children's education, getting a job, improving job skills, or becoming more involved in community activities. More than **600 goals** were met, including 7 students who got a GED or passed at least one section; 3 students who became U.S. citizens; 63 student who got a job or improved their job skills; 88 students who increased their involvement in their children's education; and 2 students who entered post-secondary education.

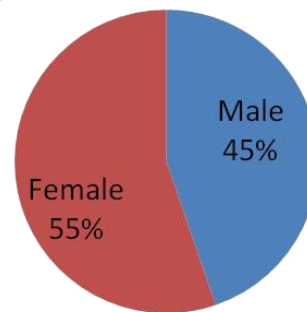
Student Program



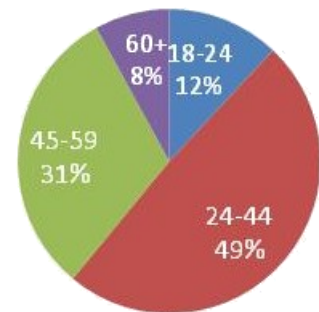
Student Ethnicity



Student Gender



Student Age



## OUR VOLUNTEERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

Our program could not exist without the efforts of our volunteer tutors. This year we served **263 tutors**, including **160 newly trained tutors**, a 65% increase over the previous year and a new record for Reading Connections! Together, these 263 dedicated individuals contributed more than 9,872 hours last year. In 2008, the Independent Sector placed the value of volunteer time at \$20.25 per hour. That means tutors contributed the equivalent of **\$199,908** worth of their time! Thanks to all our tutors for their valued—and valuable—efforts!



Our **family literacy** program continues to grow, serving 65 families this year. Every week these families get a free children's book, building the start of a home library while they work to strengthen their own skills and help their children prepare to enter school ready to learn.

More than ever, our **workplace literacy** programs were in demand as the high unemployment rate drove more and more adults with low literacy to improve their skills. (Over half—51%—of our students this year were unemployed.) Our innovative on-site project at **High Point Regional Health System** continued to help employees improve their job skills and advance within the hospital career structure. Our workplace programs helped 83 adults improve their job skills by improving their basic literacy.

We helped over 200 families by providing easy-to-understand health information through our **health literacy** program. In addition, we trained 30 adult educators to incorporate health literacy materials into their instructional practices. We also provided important training to 10 clinics, helping health care practitioners understand and address the needs of patients with low literacy.

Our **High Point** operations have expanded beyond our wildest expectations. During our first year in High Point in 2004-2005, we served 46 students and 8 tutors. In 2008-2009 we served 280 students and 90 tutors! In the coming year we expect High Point to represent fully half of our students served.

New student activities this year included our **writing lab** where students could practice their creative writing skills, learn to edit their writing, and share feedback with other students; **public speaking** class to help students hone their communication and speaking skills; and a new **Student Council** format that incorporates expert speakers on topics of interest to members of the Student Council.



*Gregory got his GED.*



*Hattie voted for the first time in the fall election.*



*Hyun became a U.S. Citizen.*



*Members of our Dega Alliance Church project in Greensboro. Volunteer tutors and instructors serve 25 students through this community site. Over 160 students were served through similar faith-based sites throughout the community during the past year. Our faith-based network includes 19 partner organizations providing volunteers and instructional space.*



Visitors to our 2008 **Holiday Social** got a special treat—a visit from the Grinch! Every year this event gives us a chance to celebrate the season. This year over 90 students, tutors, board members, and their families joined us for music, refreshments, holiday crafts, and photos with the Grinch.



Our 9th Annual **Scrabble Challenge** was a success, raising over \$23,000 for the agency. Over 150 participants joined us on April 7th, 2009 at the Marriott Hotel in Downtown Greensboro to show off their Scrabble skills. Emcee Sheeka Strickland kept the night running smoothly and helped distribute trophies and raffle prizes, including a new bike and a scooter! Don't miss our 10th Annual Scrabble Challenge this spring!

The 2nd Annual **Literacy Leadership Breakfast** was held May 28th, 2009 at the Greensboro Country Club. The morning showcased the stories and experiences of our students and raised almost \$43,000 in multi-year pledges for Reading Connections. Lee Kinard served as emcee, and featured speakers included students Robert Wilson, Rosa Alonso, Hyun Ban, Kasech Tesfaye, Janet Blakney, Dolan Skeen, Edith Campbell, and tutor Mary Shingledecker.



Our annual **Award Ceremony** recognized the accomplishments and contributions of students and tutors. Honorees included Students of the Year Dora Lewis and Preskilla Nhier; GED Achievers Gregory Statom, Tylitha Bennett, and Melvin Rogers; Star Students Edith Campbell, Akuol Amol, Hyun Ban, James Romero, Steven Hairston, and Kasech Tesfaye; Exceptional Tutors Kelley Griffith and Katherine Hodge, and Tutors of the Year Ray Joye and Ken Titlebaum. Student speaker Ricky Bullock inspired all with his moving speech, followed by James Shields of Guilford College.



<u>Assets</u>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2008</b>
Current Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 97,495	\$ 39,964
Prepaid expenses	1,417	2,190
Current portion of grants and contributions receivable	99,602	145,221
Total current assets	<u>230,606</u>	<u>187,375</u>
Investments:		
Certificates of deposit	125,176	120,957
Beneficial interest in endowments	50,427	58,421
	<u>175,603</u>	<u>179,378</u>
Other Assets:		
Grants and contributions receivable, less current portion	<u>45,000</u>	<u>-</u>
Office furniture and equipment	38,832	38,832
Less accumulated depreciation	36,901	36,143
	<u>1,931</u>	<u>2,689</u>
Computer software	11,353	11,353
Less accumulated amortization	10,775	10,082
	<u>578</u>	<u>1,271</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 418,626</u>	<u>\$ 370,713</u>

## Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities:		
Accrued expenses	\$ 23,494	\$ 9,211
Total current liabilities	<u>23,494</u>	<u>9,211</u>
Net Assets:		
Unrestricted	201,707	158,414
Unrestricted board designated	50,427	57,867
Temporarily restricted	142,998	145,221
Total net assets	<u>395,132</u>	<u>361,502</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 418,626</u>	<u>\$ 370,713</u>



	2008-2009	2007-2008
Support:		
Grants and contributions:		
United Way Greensboro	\$ 118,963	\$ 118,474
Grants	423,488	280,499
Other	58,166	463,320
	<u>600,617</u>	<u>463,320</u>
Revenues:		
Investment loss	(8,256)	(926)
Other income	4,743	2,148
	<u>(3,513)</u>	<u>1,222</u>
Total support and revenues	<u>597,104</u>	<u>464,542</u>
Expenses:		
Program services:		
Tutor services	185,070	163,924
Student services	245,785	244,684
	<u>430,855</u>	<u>408,608</u>
Supporting services:		
General and administrative	73,134	79,752
Fund-raising	59,486	60,951
	<u>132,620</u>	<u>140,703</u>
Total expenses	<u>563,475</u>	<u>549,311</u>
Changes in net assets	33,629	(84,769)
Net assets, beginning of year	361,502	446,271
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$395,131</u>	<u>\$ 361,502</u>



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Yes! Weekly



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# CONNECT WITH READING CONNECTIONS

Our one-hour “Connect With Reading Connections” tour is a fantastic way to learn more about Reading Connections or to introduce your friends, family, and colleagues to our agency.

This tour gives guests the chance to experience life without literacy; to hear the stories of some of our students and tutors; to explore our resources; and to meet the staff, students, and tutors.

Tour dates are listed on our web site, or you can call 336-230-2223 for a list of upcoming dates.

We are also available to conduct a “virtual tour” in your home or office. These virtual tours can last between 20 minutes to an hour depending on available time.

## TAKE THE HIGH FIVE CHALLENGE



If every person in Guilford County gave just \$5, we would have over \$2 million dollars to use to fight low literacy in our community! You can be part of the movement to end illiteracy now! Our goal is to raise \$50,000 by 5-5-2010. Now more than ever Reading Connections and our students need your support, donations, and advocacy as we face challenging economic times.

\$5, or \$5 a month, or \$5 a week...no matter what you give, you can make a difference. \$5 will buy a workbook for a student working towards a GED. It will pay for copies of worksheets for an entire class. Or it will pay for an assessment to help a student see how much progress she has made.

The important part is where your \$5 meets everyone else's \$5...together you make a difference that's more than the sum of its parts. It says our community cares about literacy and wants to do something important together. So take the HIGH FIVE Challenge today and leave your mark on literacy! Visit our web site to see what your \$5 can do and click the “Donate Now” button.

## BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Volunteer tutors are at the heart of what we do. For as little as 90 minutes each week, you can make a profound and lasting difference in someone's life. We have a variety of volunteer opportunities including one-to-one tutoring, small group instruction, office/administrative work, technical assistance, and more! We provide the training and resources, you provide the time and caring!

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, hosting a speaker to recruit volunteers at a civic group or business, or if you have ideas to share with us, please call or contact us through our web site.

[www.readingconnections.org](http://www.readingconnections.org)





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