



**DREAM**  
*to Read!*



**READING  
CONNECTIONS**

2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT



Our grateful thanks to Redding Communications for their design expertise and commitment to the mission of Reading Connections.

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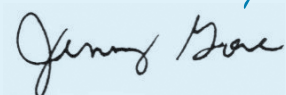
*Dear Friends:*

It is always a pleasure to reflect back on a year's accomplishments, and this year has shown us that we're traveling in the right direction. After several challenging years during which we struggled to balance increased demand, quality improvement efforts, and a difficult economic environment, the results of the past year justified all our hard work. Not only did we serve the most students of any year in our history - more than 1,000 participants through all our programs - **but we also saw a historic 51% of our post-tested students advance a full literacy level.** This is compared to an average of 38% of students making such advancement over the past four years - a remarkable jump that we hope will pave the way to even better results in the coming years.

These numbers are not only important indicators of agency effectiveness; they also represent real and significant changes in the lives of our students who are pursuing their dream to read. They represent 121 people who found a job, kept a job, or got a promotion. They represent 100 children who have a better foundation for academic success, and more than 60 parents who are better able to provide for their families and support their children's education. They represent more than 320 adults who can take better care of themselves **because they can now read and understand** basic health information. A remarkable 91% of our full-time students met at least one personal goal this year, giving them the confidence that they are building the skills to succeed at any endeavor.

Our students' struggles and successes are an inspiration to our staff and volunteers. And the support of the community - donors, volunteers, advisors, ambassadors - has made it possible for us to steer through sometimes murky waters to reach our own goals as an agency. Our journey is far from over; we have set ambitious goals for further improvement over the next several years. But we know that with the steadfast support of friends like you who continue to support the dream of literacy, **we will continue to see amazing results for our students and our community.**

*Sincerely,*



Jennifer Gore  
Executive Director

# Who we are and *what we're about*

Reading Connections was founded in 1990 by Cynthia Doyle and Mary Adams Stephens. The organization started out as an information and referral hotline for other literacy programs in the community. Within a year, demand had grown so much that the agency began providing direct one-to-one instruction for adults with significant literacy needs. Since then Reading Connections has trained more than 1,000 volunteers who have helped thousands of adults improve their basic skills and reach their goals.

We believe in the right of every adult to pursue his or her ambitions to meet individualized goals. Reading Connections strives to assist adults through a variety of learning methods to promote the attainment of competencies needed in today's society, to prepare adults for active and responsible participation as citizens, and to empower adults to be successful in their work and family lives.

Our mission is to provide and advocate for free, individualized adult literacy services to promote life changes for Guilford County residents and surrounding communities.

## Our Leadership

### 2010-2011 Board of Directors

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Nancy Vaughan - Community Volunteer

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**Executive Director** - Jennifer Gore

**Assistant Director** - Marcy Ray

**Program Manager** - Micah Guindon

**Accounting Manager and  
Family Literacy Coordinator** - Kim Taylor

**Accounting Assistant** - Teresa Ahrens

**High Point Coordinator** - Kyri Murdough

**Volunteer Services Coordinators** - Rhiannon Kelly  
and Beth Larson

**Student Services Coordinators** - Laura DeMaria  
(Greensboro) and Nick Foley (High Point)

**ESOL Coordinator** - Andrew Trump

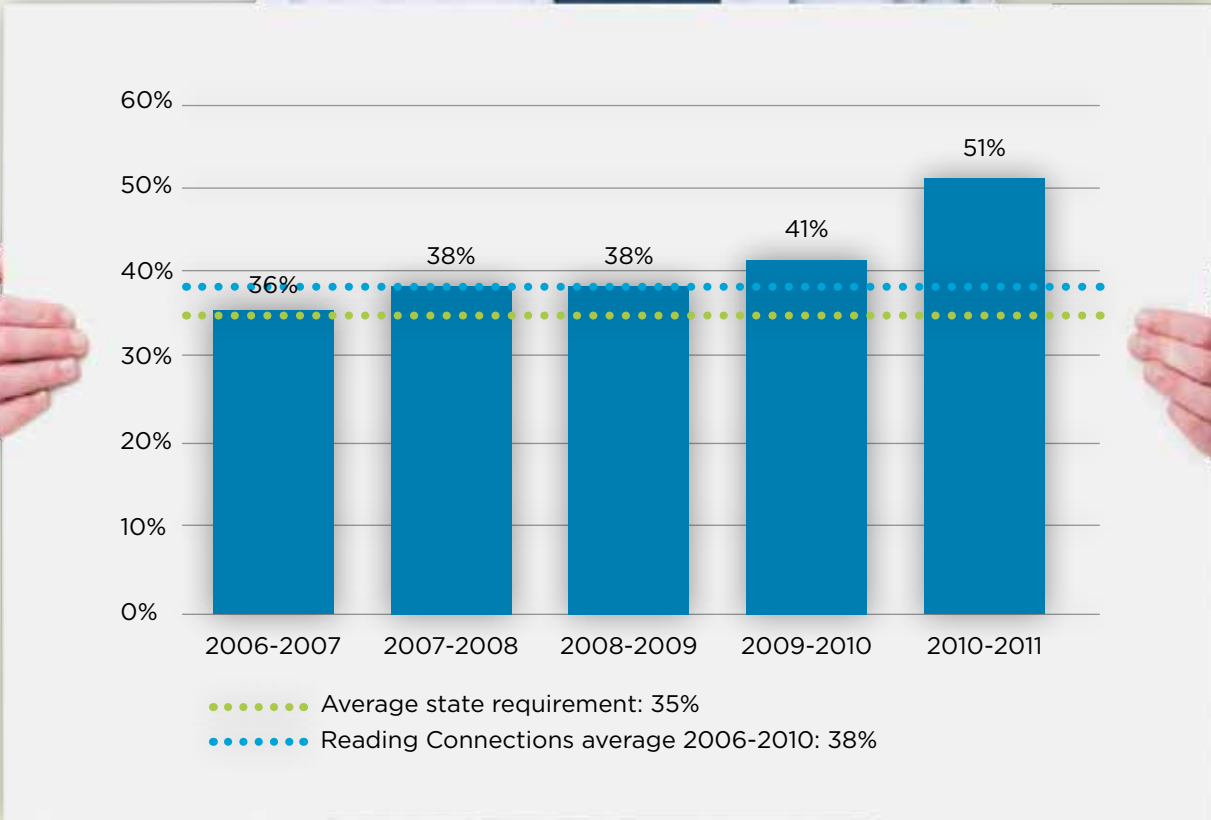
**Reading Specialists** - Debra Mitchell  
and Mary Lester

**Administrative Assistant and Family  
Literacy Assistant** - Amy Bruner de Rodriguez

**AmeriCorps Interns** - Ashley Edwards  
and Jennyfer Fredette

# Results and accomplishments

Last year was a pivotal year as we implemented new best practices and program improvements resulting from a monitoring visit from the NC Community College System and from our own extensive program evaluation efforts. We intensified our volunteer tutor training and support efforts, we expanded the use of our *Toolkit for the Literacy Roadtrip*® by our one-to-one tutors and small group instructors, and we implemented a new research-based instructional methodology (Student Achievement in Reading, or STAR) which includes focused student diagnostic testing and specialized training for instructors. **The results were astounding as we saw tremendous and historic increases in the percentage of students making significant progress.**

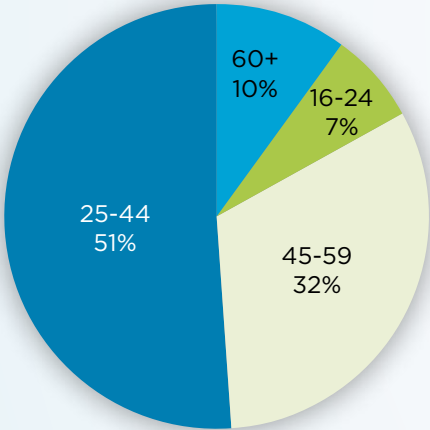


# Results and accomplishments *(continued)*

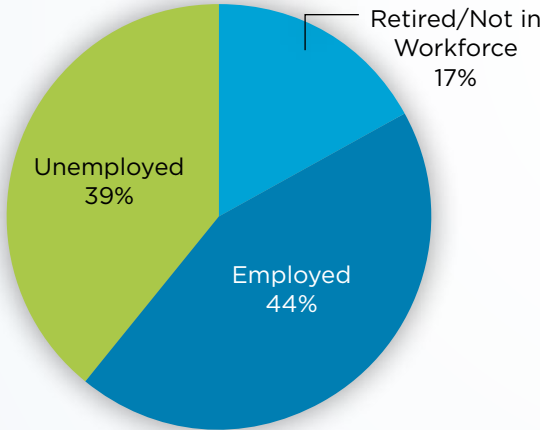
### Other accomplishments included:

- \* Our students completed more than 21,000 hours of instruction (up from 18,000 the year before).
- \* Volunteer tutors contributed 11,608 hours of service, a 32% increase from the prior year! Using a common value for volunteer time, this represents a contribution of over \$211,000!
- \* 70% of full-time students made significant literacy gains measured with a pre- and post-instruction assessment of literacy skills.
- \* 99% of post-tested students met at least one personal goal such as getting a job or promotion, keeping a job, entering post-secondary education or vocational training, increasing their involvement in their children’s education, or passing their citizenship interview.

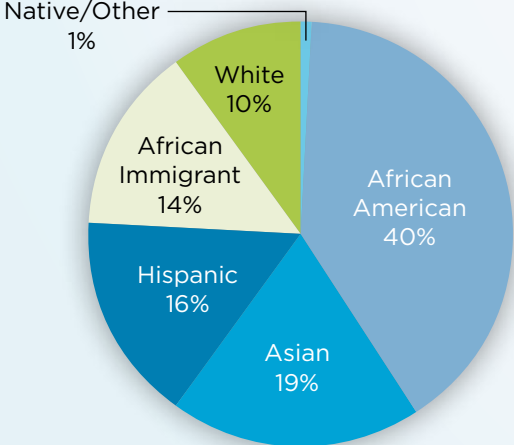
**Student Age**



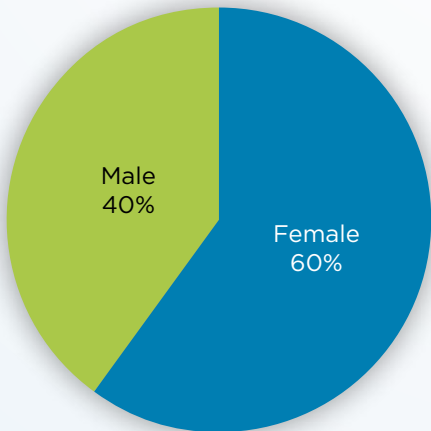
**Employment Status**

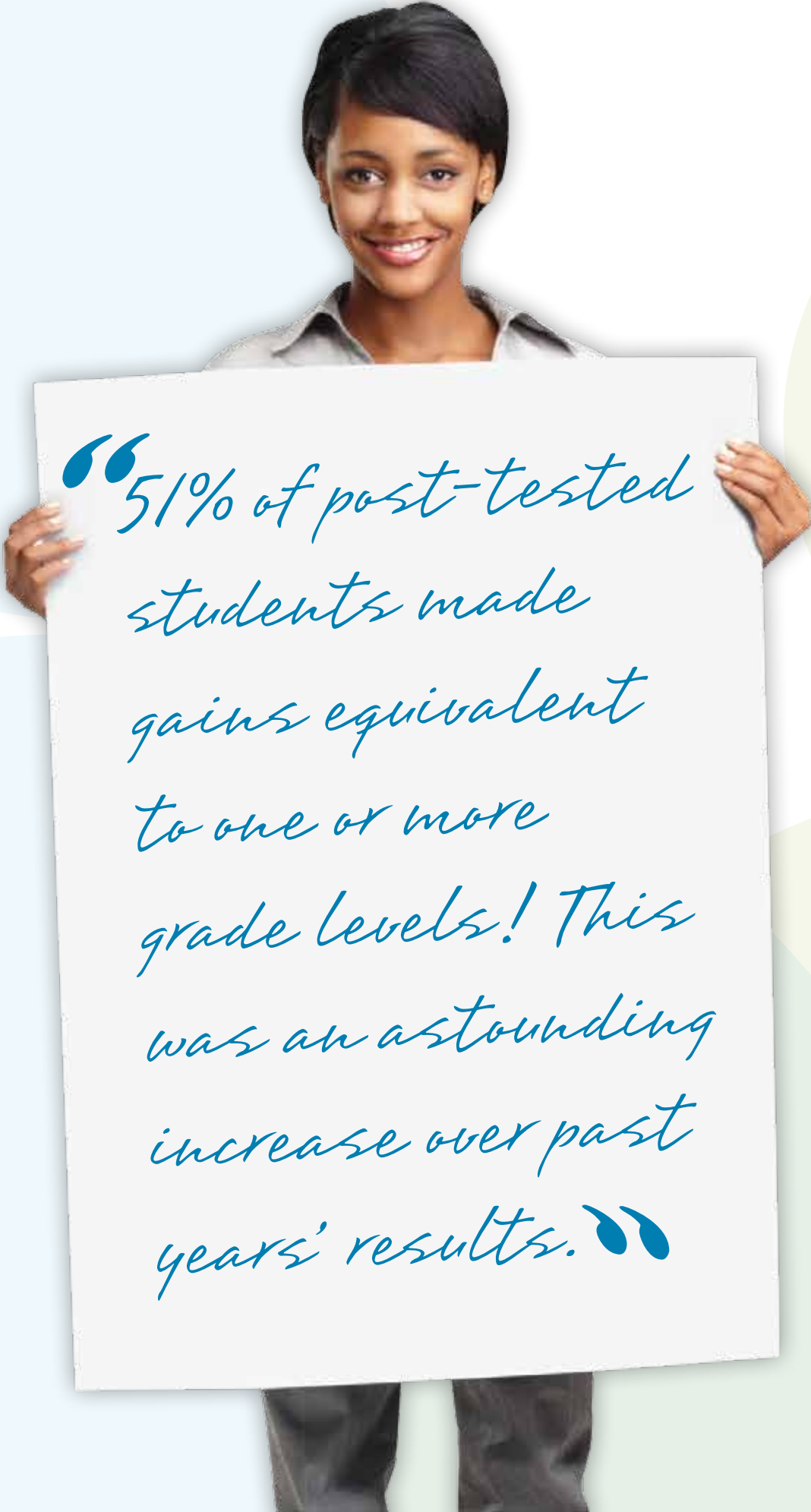


**Student Ethnicity**



**Student Gender**



A young woman with short dark hair, wearing a light-colored collared shirt, is smiling and holding a large white sign. The sign contains a quote in blue cursive text. The background features large, soft-edged circles in light blue and light green.

“51% of post-tested students made gains equivalent to one or more grade levels! This was an astounding increase over past years' results.”

# Financials

*for years ended June 30, 2011 and 2010*

<b>Activities and Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Support:</b>		
<b>Grants and contributions:</b>		
United Way of Greater Greensboro	\$100,765	\$94,518
Grants	\$430,652	\$369,978
Other	\$76,782	\$68,647
	<u>\$608,199</u>	<u>\$533,143</u>
<b>Revenues:</b>		
Investment income	\$14,768	\$9,073
Other income	\$1,193	\$816
	<u>\$15,961</u>	<u>\$9,889</u>
<b>Total support and revenues</b>	<b>\$624,160</b>	<b>\$543,032</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
<b>Program services:</b>		
Tutor services	\$230,640	\$170,673
Student services	\$261,041	\$193,229
	<u>\$491,681</u>	<u>\$363,902</u>
<b>Supporting services:</b>		
General and administrative	\$70,232	\$84,675
Fund-raising	\$34,003	\$41,174
	<u>\$104,235</u>	<u>\$125,849</u>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$595,916</b>	<b>\$489,751</b>
Changes in net assets	\$28,244	\$53,281
Net assets, beginning of year	\$483,505	\$430,224
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$511,749</u>	<u>\$483,505</u>

A copy of audited financial statements is available on website or by request.

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Current Assets:</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$138,904	\$158,480
Certificates of deposit and business savings account	\$117,843	\$116,699
Prepaid expenses	\$1,488	\$2,942
Grants receivable	\$146,249	\$108,995
Current portion of grants and contributions receivable	\$15,000	\$15,000
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>\$419,484</b>	<b>\$402,116</b>
<b>Investments:</b>		
Beneficial interest in endowments	\$70,612	\$57,460
<b>Other Assets:</b>		
Pledges receivable, less current portion	\$0	\$30,000
<b>Property and Equipment</b>		
Office furniture and equipment	\$47,374	\$38,832
Leasehold improvements	\$38,500	\$0
	\$85,874	\$38,832
Less accumulated depreciation	\$42,945	\$37,596
	\$42,929	\$1,236
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$533,025</b>	<b>\$490,812</b>

## **Liabilities and Net Assets**

<b>Current Liabilities:</b>		
Accrued expenses	\$21,276	\$7,307
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>\$21,276</b>	<b>\$7,307</b>
<b>Net Assets:</b>		
Unrestricted		
Undesignated	\$264,956	\$237,065
Board designated for endowment	\$70,612	\$57,460
Temporarily restricted	\$176,181	\$188,980
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>\$511,749</b>	<b>\$483,505</b>
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>\$533,025</b>	<b>\$490,812</b>

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*Please forgive any omissions.*

# Literacy Programs

## Health Literacy

With health care costs skyrocketing and chronic health problems increasingly prevalent, health literacy - the ability to read, understand and use healthcare information to make decisions and follow instructions for treatment - is more important than ever. Reading Connections helps adults with low literacy and low health literacy improve their understanding of basic health information. Last year, with support from the United Way, we provided health literacy services for 323 individuals. These services included basic health literacy instruction in small group classes and special events such as a diabetes and vision screening clinic (offered in conjunction with the Montagnard Dega Association and Cone Health Congregational Nurse Program), yoga lessons, and a trip to the Greensboro Farmers Market where members of our Student Council learned about healthy diet. We also distributed more than 200 copies of books from the "What To Do For Health" series. These books, written at a third-grade level, contain easy-to-read health information on topics such as childhood illness, senior health, and dental care. Our services also included training for health workers and adult educators through a Health Care Symposium and training for 32 AmeriCorps interns providing health literacy instruction for immigrants and refugees. Through our many partnerships, Reading Connections is working hard to help expand awareness of health literacy issues and build a healthier Guilford County.

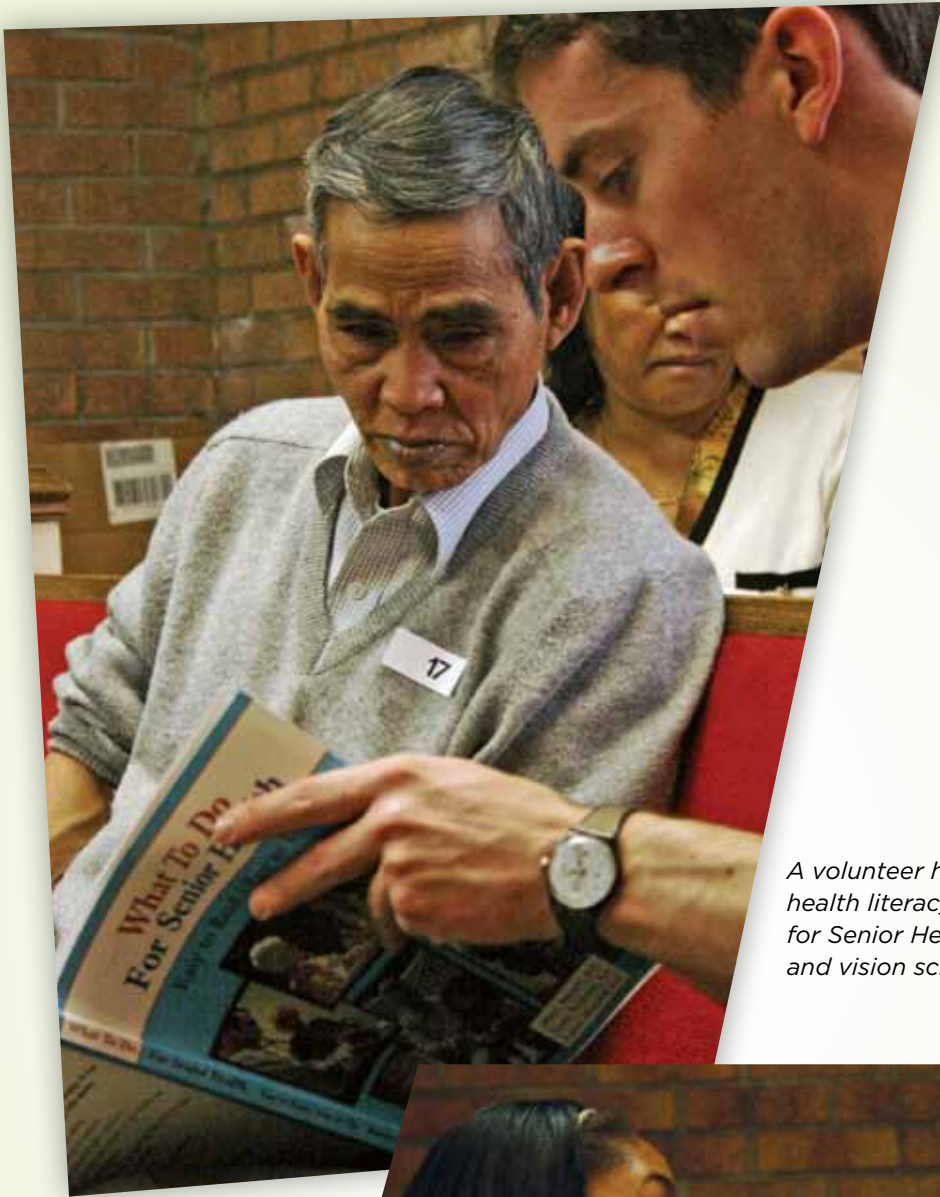


*A clinic visitor gets his blood glucose measured at our Diabetes and Vision Screening Clinic.*



*Members of the Student Council get a yoga session.*





*A volunteer helps explain a basic health literacy book - "What to Do for Senior Health" - at our diabetes and vision screening clinic.*



*Volunteers teach basic health vocabulary at our diabetes and vision screening clinic.*

# Literacy Programs *(continued)*

## Family Literacy

Reading Connections was honored to receive one of four highly competitive grant awards from the Volunteer USA Foundation in 2010. This grant allowed us to create the Family Literacy Academy of Guilford County at Hunter Elementary School in Greensboro. This intensive family literacy program provides classes twice weekly for the duration of the school year for parents who want to improve their literacy skills and build a culture of literacy in their homes. The goal of our family literacy program is to halt the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy by providing low-literate parents with the knowledge and resources to be their children's

first teachers while also developing the skills and confidence to pursue and achieve their own personal, educational, and employment goals. Our program emphasizes the importance of positive parent-child interactions as a foundation for early cognitive development, including language development and early reading skills.

Last year the Family Literacy Academy served 32 parents and 40 children. The results of this program are amazing. More than 70% of parents made significant literacy gains, and 54% made gains equivalent to several grade levels! Participating children also made significant gains in literacy or pre-literacy skills.

One way the Family Literacy Academy helps families to build a culture of literacy in the home is by providing the start of a small home library. Each family gets a free children's book to keep each week, and children get to choose books as rewards throughout the program. Parents also receive craft supplies so they and their children can create craft projects related to the weekly book between classes.



This program would not be possible without the support of a community of volunteers. The Greensboro Newcomers Club made hundreds of “reading buddy” pillows for the children at the Family Literacy Academy and our other family literacy sites. These fleece pillows hold a book, a whiteboard, and markers, and make reading time fun and cozy. The Stokesdale Kids Care Club collected over 900 books through a book drive and made hand-decorated canvas bags of books that were also presented to our families at a mid-year celebration in December. The Family Literacy Academy of Guilford County is also supported with funds from Smart Start (through the Guilford County Partnership for Children) and from the Joseph M. Bryan Human Services grant program.

We are extremely proud of the success of this program. Based on its success, the Volunteer USA Foundation provided another grant to sustain the Family Literacy Academy of Guilford County for a second year. We look forward to reporting the amazing accomplishments of this program next year!



*Dollar General Regional Manager Scott Ward and Volunteer USA Foundation President Liza McFadden at the press conference announcing the start of the Family Literacy Academy of Guilford County.*



*Parents and their children at our end-of-year celebration.*



# In the News

## 20th Anniversary Celebration

Reading Connections celebrated 20 years providing literacy services in Guilford County with a reception for past and current board members and funders. The reunion took place on October 26th at Greensboro College. We were delighted to reconnect with so many of the people who helped make Reading Connections the successful agency it is today! Guests had a chance to peruse fragments of history in scrapbooks of newspaper clippings and photos. They also got to hear from our first Executive Director, Jean Pudlo; current Executive Director Jenny Gore; founding board member Dr. Judy Cheatham; and long-time tutor Mary Shingledecker.



*Founding board member Dr. Judy Cheatham with founder Cynthia Doyle and past Executive Director Joyia Clayton.*

## Advocacy Day in Washington D.C.

Reading Connections' mission is to "provide and advocate for free, individualized adult literacy services." While we most frequently focus on providing those services, this year we also did a lot of advocating for adult literacy services and resources.

Program Manager Micah Guindon took part in ProLiteracy Capitol Hill Day in May. Adult learners and program managers took to the halls of Congress to urge their elected officials to support funding for adult literacy and basic education programs. Representatives and staff from Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia made themselves available to learn more about this important cause. Micah spoke to staff from NC Senator Kay Hagan's office and shared with them the impact adult literacy programs like ours have on their students and communities throughout North Carolina.

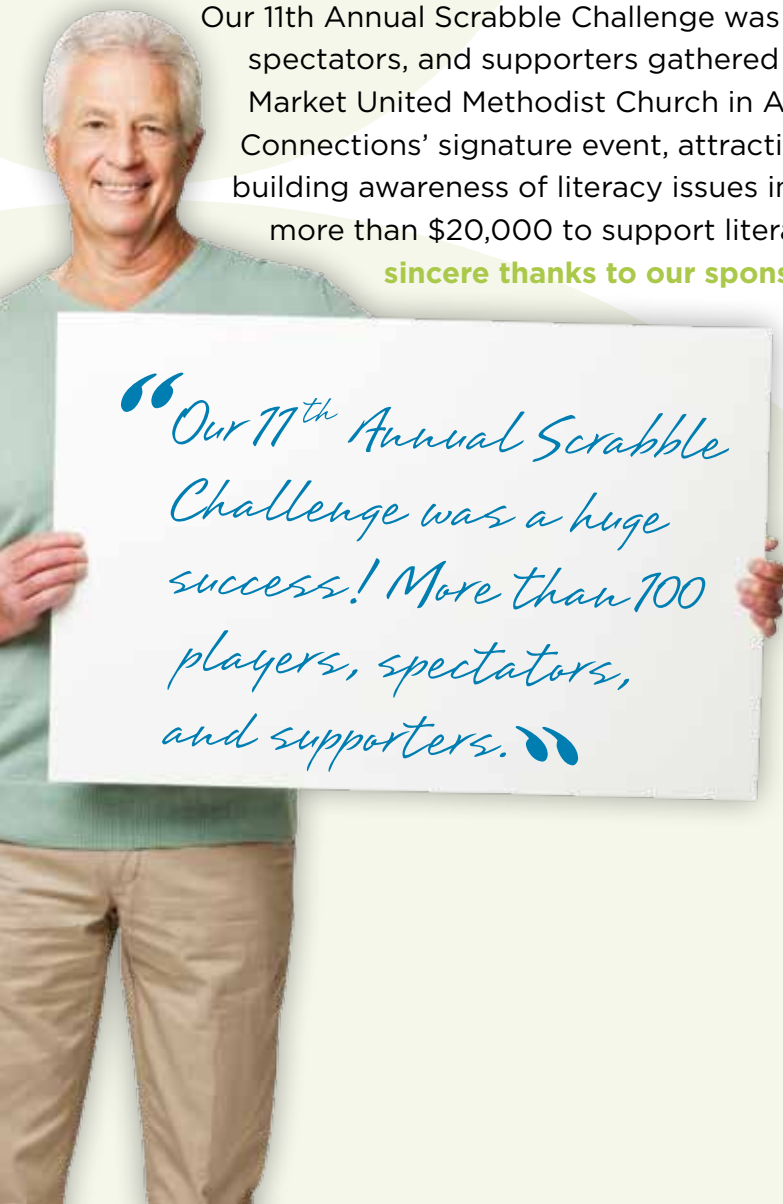
Our staff advocacy efforts were coupled with student advocacy efforts. Students in our family literacy program practiced their writing skills by sending letters to the NC State Legislature asking them to continue to support and fund family literacy services. When the children in our program learned what their parents were doing, they wanted to write letters, too! Parents told their legislators how much the program means to them and what it has made possible for them and their families.

## High Point Office

After raising funds in 2010 to pay for construction of our new office space within the High Point Public Library, Reading Connections celebrated the opening of its new offices with a ribbon-cutting and reception in November. More than 50 tutors, students, donors, and supporters gathered to celebrate. Guests were treated to words from High Point Mayor Becky Smothers who joined Wachovia Wells Fargo representative David Nissen, Patrick Harman of the Hayden-Harman Foundation, and library Director Kem Ellis in cutting the ribbon on our new offices. The Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation and the Hayden-Harman Foundation provided generous grants in support of the new construction.

## Annual Scrabble Challenge

Our 11th Annual Scrabble Challenge was a huge success! More than 100 players, spectators, and supporters gathered to celebrate the power of words at the West Market United Methodist Church in April. The Scrabble Challenge is Reading Connections' signature event, attracting corporate and community support and building awareness of literacy issues in Guilford County. This year's event raised more than \$20,000 to support literacy in Guilford County. **We extend our sincere thanks to our sponsors and all who attended!**



*“Our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Scrabble Challenge was a huge success! More than 100 players, spectators, and supporters. 🍀”*

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