



Reading for Life e-news

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of Reading for Life e-news, a quarterly newsletter to keep you up-to-date with Reading for Life across Australia and New Zealand and share tips and stories about your progress.

We'd like to encourage all our Reading for Life volunteers to contribute – just a quick email to our editor, Robyn Collins is all that is needed. Robyn's e-mail address is rcollins@learninglinks.org.au.

As this is our first issue, we'd like to let everyone know just how far we have come and what is happening around Australia and in New Zealand.

I would like to take this opportunity in our first e-news to thank all our buddies for their dedication to helping children who are struggling at school. You are giving your buddies the best chance to achieve their full potential by helping them with literacy.

Thank you also to the vision and support from the staff of Unilever Australasia who wanted to make a difference by helping children who were falling behind at school.

Regards
Dr. Danielle Tracey
National Director

"We clothe 3,000 children a year. We're involved heavily with boys and girls clubs. We spent years changing lives in different ways and then we quickly realised that education was the way to change a child's life".
Andre Agassi (Interview 60 minutes)

Who is involved?

From our first programs in mid-2003 in Epping and Marrickville in NSW and Petone and Newmarket in New Zealand, by mid-2006 Reading for Life had expanded to help 698 children from 22 different schools. But just where do all the buddies come from?

The following companies and organisations are now involved with Reading for Life.

- Unilever Australasia (NSW, Vic & NZ)
- Allens Arthur Robinson (NSW)
- Genworth Financial (NSW & NZ)
- Guildford Bowling Club (NSW)
- H.V. McKay Charitable Foundation
- ANZ (Vic, NSW, Qld, WA),
- Cadbury Schweppes (Vic & Tas)
- Rio Tinto (Vic)
- Amcor (Vic)
- Mitchell and Partners (NSW & Vic)
- Hutt City Council (NZ)
- Students from SIFE, University of NSW (NSW).
- University of Western Sydney (NSW)
- United Way – Northern Beaches Youth Community Fund (NSW)

A country school joins the program

In late 2005, the program received the news that the H.V. McKay Charitable Foundation had approved funding for a Reading for Life program in a school in Coffs Harbour on the far north coast of NSW.

This was the first time a foundation had funded the program and the first time the program was able to move outside a major metropolitan location and utilise local community volunteers to help children who had fallen behind in their reading.

Local community volunteers became Reading Buddies and the program has been so successful that it has attracted funding from five local clubs towards a second program in 2007.

In a letter of support, the Principal, Graham Doust, said "*The improvement in the children's reading and their confidence varied from excellent to simply outstanding.*"

He went on to say, "*The program has made a difference to those involved in it. It has, for many of the children, made the breakthrough that can be very difficult to make in a large class situation....Parents have been amazed and very thankful for this opportunity.*"

New locally based Co-ordinators

Since mid-2003 Reading for Life has been delivered by Learning Links' staff based in Sydney. Given the recent growth and geographical reach of the program we have appointed additional staff in various locations.

It is my pleasure to introduce our new Reading for Life co-ordinators.

Leanne Reynolds. Leanne is an educational psychologist and has worked for Learning Links for four years. She will be co-ordinating programs in NSW and other areas of Australia outside Victoria. She can be contacted on nsw@readingforlife.net.au.

Michelle Barca. Michelle is an experienced teacher and she will be co-ordinating our Victorian programs. She can be contacted on vic@readingforlife.net.au.

Fiona Shanahan. Fiona is an experienced teacher and she will be co-ordinating programs in New Zealand. She can be contacted on nz@readingforlife.net.au.

Australian Research Council (ARC) linkage grant in partnership with the University of Western Sydney SELF Research Centre

In late 2005, Learning Links, in partnership with Unilever Australasia and the University of Western Sydney SELF Research Centre, applied for an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage grant to support a three year research project on Reading for Life. The application was backed by leading education specialists, Professor Rhonda Craven and Professor Tony Vinson.

To our delight, the three-year Commonwealth Government grant was approved in July 2006.

The grant will enable researchers to fully test the program and its results in accordance with rigorous academic standards and help measure the differences in children's reading and self-esteem generated by the program.

Counting for Life

The success of Genworth Financial's participation in Reading for Life has led to the company commissioning Learning Links to develop Counting for Life, a similar volunteer-based program helping primary school children struggling with numeracy.

Counting for Life will be trialed in late 2006 and will be a vital part of Genworth Financial's commitment to helping children in the community.

2010 Goal

Our goal is to help 10,000 children through Reading for Life by 2010. Thank you for your contribution!