



## **Rotary Club of Ames Morning Early Literacy Project Reach Out and Read**

Rotary Club of Ames Morning helped start the Reach Out and Read (ROR) program in Story County in order to help prepare children to succeed in school. In the ROR model, doctors encourage families to read together and give them new books to take home and read together. Ames Morning Rotary continues to support ROR annually as a Lead Sponsor.

**Why:** The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. (Becoming a Nation of Readers) ROR is an evidence-based school readiness initiative that addresses the concern that only 48% of parents in the United States read to their young children daily. Families served by Reach Out and Read read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies, stronger language skills, and a six-month developmental edge. ([www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org))

In America 34% of children entering kindergarten lack the basic language skills needed to learn to read. Ames has seen a trend toward improved school readiness, from 62% of entering kindergartners demonstrating early literacy skills in 2008 to 80% in 2013.

**What:** The ROR model has three components: 1) children receive books at each check-up from 6 months to 5 years, 2) doctors encourage families to read aloud daily at home, and 3) waiting rooms are literacy-rich environments.

**Who:** Ames Morning Rotarians first invited McFarland pediatricians to try ROR. Then the nonprofit organization Raising Readers in Story County became the official sponsor of the program and took responsibility for providing books, funding, Reading Corners, and biannual Progress Reports. By 2007 all primary care physicians in the county were participating. Almost 10,000 books are distributed through ROR each year. ROR places special emphasis on serving children growing up in families with low-incomes. To help reach children who may not see the doctor regularly in the first two years, Raising Readers also provides books to staff at the Mid-Iowa Community Action WIC Clinic in Ames so they can follow the ROR model with their clients.

**When:** In 2002 Ames Morning Rotary first created a reading corner in the McFarland Clinic pediatric waiting room with a bookcase, books and glider rocker. Then the club began purchasing children's books for ROR-trained pediatricians to give out at 6-month check-ups.

**Where:** In Story County, the Reach Out and Read program occurs in doctors' offices and in the WIC Clinic. In 2006 Ames Morning Rotary helped lead "Rotarians for Reach Out and Read," a D6000 campaign that raised \$30,000 to expand ROR in Iowa. We continue to encourage other clubs to consider supporting ROR programs in their communities. [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org)

**How:** The model requires a Medical Director and Site Coordinator. A Story County book selection team chooses age-appropriate books for each check-up level. Titles change every few years. Generous local Lead Sponsors make annual donations to ensure an adequate supply of books. Rotary Club of Ames Morning funds 1,000 books that doctors give to 6-month olds. Rotary Club of Ames funds 1,000 books for 2-year-olds

# Reach Out and Read Story County

