



Rotary Club of Ames Morning Early Literacy Project Reading Corners

Community Reading Corners in public places transform waiting rooms into reading rooms by providing access to appealing books and enticing parents and children to read together.

Why: These easily accessible sites encourage parents to read with their children, even if just for a few minutes. Minutes add up to hours of learning and a shared appreciation of books will stay with children through school and life. Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for raising readers. The early years in a child's life are a critical time for beginning to learn to listen, speak, read and write. The amount of language children hear before the age of three correlates with future academic success. (Hart and Risley) Enjoying good books together also strengthens adult-child relationships.

What: The Reading Corner project provides one of the three components of the national Reach Out and Read model: the literacy-rich waiting room environment. If space allows, each corner consists of a bookcase, a collection of good books, a comfortable chair, and a sign or poster. However, it could be as simple as a book nook with a basket of children's books.

Who: Ames Morning Rotary Club created the first Reading Corner in the Pediatric Department waiting room at McFarland Clinic in Ames with funds from a Rotary Children's Opportunity Grant. In subsequent years members of the Rotary club helped found Raising Readers in Story County. This nonprofit organization then adopted the program and has expanded to maintaining 21 Reading Corners countywide.

When: In 2002 the Rotary Club of Ames Morning first created a Reading Corner in the Pediatric Department McFarland Clinic waiting room to entice families to read with their young children while waiting. Whenever a new clinic and physicians joined the ROR program, Raising Readers worked with their staff to design and install a Reading Corner.

Where: After starting in Ames, the program is now countywide. The 21 Reading Corners are located in healthcare clinics, human service agencies, and education sites in Story County.

How: First, identify a public location, create a site plan and prepare a budget. Plan for book storage and comfortable seating. Consider adding lighting, flooring, murals or posters, a child's table and chairs, signage, and other literacy-related resources for children and parents. Consult your local librarian or Raising Readers in Story County if you'd like help selecting high quality age-appropriate books. A front-facing display bookcase 36-inches wide by 30-inches high can hold about 40 books. The composition could include 10 board books, 10 multicultural picture books, 10 funny picture books, 5 other picture books, and 5 nonfiction books. Develop a plan for ongoing maintenance and replenishing the books. Consider hosting a grand opening celebration and future special events such as family story times or celebrity readers.

Story County Reading Corners

