



**THIS CITY READS!
FIRST REPORT**

**A 2005 Progress Report
on the Efforts of This City Reads!**

February 8, 2006

Imagine what's possible...

...when an entire community works together to assure that every child learns to read and every adult can read! And imagine what will be possible when we have the tools to monitor our progress and—as a community—adjust our actions to realize our goal.

This is the meaning of the This City Reads! Vision:

***Akron/Summit County will become the
“Reading Capital of the World”***

Introduction

This City Reads! is committed to significantly raise the number of Summit County's citizens, young and old, who can read. One in five adults in Summit County lack adequate literacy skills to be fully self-sufficient. (According to 2004 U.S Census data and The National Institute for Literacy 1999 *State of Literacy in America* report) The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 defines literacy as "an individual's ability to read, write, speak English, compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family and in society."

Of a total population of 543,000 in Summit County, 411,000 are over the age of 18 years, 36,000 are under five years old and 39,000 are between the ages of 5 and 9. If each of us does one thing each year to help a child or an adult learn to read, we will be one more powerful step closer to our vision.

As Dr. Sylvester Small became Superintendent of Akron Public Schools in 2001, community leaders offered to mobilize the community around a key strategic area that would support schools. Following several months of dialogue and data review, a decision to concentrate on reading was made and plans to engage organizations and individuals were launched.

In 2003, dozens of organizations came together to create This City Reads! (TCR), ***a community alliance of organizations to champion and leverage the power of reading to promote the future success of families, individuals, and businesses in Greater Akron/Summit County.*** TCR focuses on mobilizing the community to supplement the work of educators beyond the school day and year-round to support families on their journey to literacy. This City Reads! Partners work as a network to strategically share resources and organize collective action around a shared mission. While by design no formal organization exists, the Akron-Summit County Public Library provides administrative support and coordination, Project: LEARN of Summit County serves as the fiscal agent and other partners provide expertise and support.

As an alliance, This City Reads! believes:

- Reading is everyone's business;
- An information-based economy requires everyone to read;
- Reading soars when family, school, and community collaborate;
- First you learn to read, then you read to learn;
- Reading is essential to improving quality of life; and
- Reading is fundamental to responsible citizenship.

This City Reads! goals are to:

- Leverage impact;
- Engage the community;
- Connect individuals and families with resources; and
- Champion the collaborative model.

The Annual Day of Reading, established in January 2004 as a way to capture the imagination and engagement of thousands of people throughout our community continues to grow. In 2004, more than 59,000 people read at one time for 30 minutes. In 2005, greater than 92,000 people read. This year, 2006, This City Reads! goal is 100,000 people! The Day of Reading is scheduled on the second Wednesday in February. This year, it will be held on February 8.

THIS CITY READS! FIRST REPORT

First Report is a baseline report to the community. Findings reported were submitted by TCR Partner organizations and are based on the This City Reads! mission, beliefs, goals and Indicators for Success. The Indicators for Success were developed to measure progress on each goal and to encourage action that supports progress toward the goals. Partner organizations reported on their activities for the period January 2005–October 2005.

GOAL ONE: LEVERAGE IMPACT

Everyone wants to see measurable progress demonstrating an increase in the rate of literacy in our community. For young children, two measures provide data. The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for Literacy (KRA-L) measures a child’s readiness to read as they enter kindergarten. The Third Grade Reading Achievement Test establishes the appropriate level of reading progress for children in the early grades.

INDICATOR ONE

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L)

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) required this assessment for the first time in Fall 2005 and has not determined how results will be reported. However, Akron Public Schools (APS) unofficially reports:

APS students entering kindergarten in the fall of 2005 demonstrated strength in answering questions, giving relevant responses, and repeating sentences. Students had difficulty with rhyming, and with identifying letters and initial sounds of words.

Note: While ODE has not released KRA-L assessment data, This City Reads! accepted information from any of the partner school districts for this report.

INDICATOR TWO

Third Grade Reading Achievement Scores

(State requirement for proficiency is a 75% passing rate)

The Third Grade Reading Achievement Test was first administered during the 2003-04 academic year in Ohio. Before that time, the Fourth Grade Reading Proficiency Test was given throughout the state. The Third Grade Achievement Test measures performance as aligned with national and state standards.

Akron Public Schools

2004-05	71.5%	(3rd Grade Reading Achievement Test)
2004-05	69.0%	(4th Grade Reading Achievement Test)
2003-04	69.0%	(3rd Grade Reading Achievement Test)
2003-04	60.1%	(4th Grade Reading Proficiency Test)
2002-03	51.2%	(4th Grade Reading Proficiency Test)
2001-02	47.8%	(4th Grade Reading Proficiency Test)

Dr. Sylvester Small, Superintendent of Akron Public Schools, has this to say about the progress shown by these numbers:

“There is great news at Akron Public Schools! Last year our reading scores were up 96 percent. How did that happen? It was a community effort. Teachers, students, parents, 784 AkronReads volunteers and more than 40 This City Reads! Partners worked together throughout the year to focus on reading. By working together, we are leveraging the power of reading to promote success for individuals and the community as a whole. In an information-based economy, everyone must be able to read. In fact, reading is essential to all learning. Why? I really can’t say it any better than Dr. Seuss... ‘The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn the more places you’ll go.’”

Activities That Support The Indicators

■ **The Akron Aeros** created the “Baseball IS Education” program as a tool aligned with Ohio Academic Content Standards, for educators to help students prepare for 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency tests. The Sports Readers curriculum helps children gather facts from a baseball game and use those facts to compose an article reporting on the game. The What Does This Mean curriculum helps children explore language by playing with letters that make up titles of baseball statistics.

■ **Akron Children’s Hospital** brought the nationally acclaimed program Reach Out and Read to our region. The program fosters the development of early literacy skill among children as a standard part of pediatric primary care. Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the program targets parents of children ages 6 months to 5 years. A standard model is incorporated which includes: information about the importance of reading aloud every day to children age 6 months to 5 years, providing a new developmentally appropriate book at well-child visits, and volunteers modeling reading techniques for parents in waiting rooms. Age appropriate books and suggestions on how to develop a love of books are dispensed much the same as treatment plans or prescriptions. Reach Out and Read distributed approximately 30,000 new books within the last year at pediatric community sites in Akron, Ashland, Barberton, Ellet, Fairlawn, Green, Kent, Medina , Tallmadge, Twinsburg, Wadsworth and Wooster. The program is funded by Kohl’s Department Stores.

■ **Akron Summit Community Action, Inc.'s Head Start Program**, which served 2059 pre-school children ages 3 to 5 in Summit County in 2004-05, integrates Ohio Department of Education Early Learning Content Standards to guide curriculum planning and implementation to promote school readiness. Head Start children and their families participated in the Annual Pizza Hut Book It! Program in March 2005 where over 1,000 books were read at centers across the county. Twenty Head Start children received enriched mentoring from Jumpstart, an AmeriCorps program through The University of Akron, which provides one-on-one support in the areas of language, literacy and social skills. During the 2004-05 academic year, children and team members read 1093 books, completed 729 print knowledge activities, engaged in 814 emergent reading activities and participated in 351 linguistic and phonemic awareness activities.

■ **The Akron Summit County Public Library Bookmobile** made 130 visits to Head Start sites in 2005 through October with 2,691 books borrowed.

■ **Green Local Schools** conducts a Birth Packet Program to send books and early literacy materials to newborns in the community. This year, preschool siblings of at-risk kindergartners were invited to meet with the principal and curriculum director at a local McDonalds for lunch to talk about language development and show parents how to do shared reading with their children. Green Local Schools had 46 children enrolled in a pre-school program.

■ Each of ten **Summit Family & Children First Council's Help Me Grow** sites incorporate literacy into home visits and monthly parents support groups. Help Me Grow also provides quarterly free developmental screenings at Summit County libraries.

■ **Kids-Play, Inc.** partnered with Akron Summit Community Action, Inc. to provide the Ohio Department of Education Early Learning Initiative Program for all pre-schoolers. All Kids-Play sites used the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation tool to improve literacy activities and the Akron location is in partnership with Jumpstart at The University of Akron.

■ **Project AGAPE** begins to work with children at the age of five. The program is geared toward preparing students to take standardized tests, focusing on comprehension of selection in a short period of time and identifying key points of the selections.

■ The **Shaw Jewish Community Center** uses the KRA-L Assessment as a skill set guideline for their emergent curriculum. These guidelines are used in monthly reviews of strategies, goals and results. Phonetic relationships, letter identification, and sight vocabulary are a focus and labeling, names, words, phrases, vocabulary, poetry and songs are everywhere in English and Hebrew. Journaling, portfolios and documentation are part of a child's daily routine. An Ethical Start® Curriculum Team focuses on training staff and parents to build a powerful learning community. One hundred sixty children, ages 0-5 years of age, were enrolled in the program.

■ The **Summit Educational Link for Families (S.E.L.F.) Even Start Program** partners with the Summit Educational Services Center, who provides the early childhood component for this family literacy program. Early learning teachers utilize the ODE Early Learning Content Standards to guide curriculum planning and implementation. The Get It, Got It, Go (GGG) assessment is administered several times a year to measure Pre-K student progress in early literacy skills.

GOAL TWO: ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

INDICATORS ONE & TWO

Reading sites for the Annual Day of Reading and total number of readers

The Annual Day of Reading was established in January 2004 to introduce large numbers of citizens to This City Reads! and to engage them in the launch of the collaborative. In the inaugural year, approximately 300 official sites were established and more than 59,000 citizens read at one time for 30 minutes. Readers could report their participation regardless of where they read.

In year two on February 2, 2005, approximately 375 official reading sites were established and 92,256 people reported their reading.

INDICATOR THREE

Community Events celebrating and recognizing reading (new and annual events)

■ **The Akron Area YMCA** began an annual event associated with its new program “Read, Write, Create.” A family celebration was held at the end of the year to unveil a newspaper and book of bio-poems created by students in this after-school program.

■ **The Akron Aeros** have been the catalyst for a number of reading-themed events. For the past two years, *This City Reads Night at the Aeros* has provided an opportunity for families to exchange a new or gently used book for a game ticket. Over 3,000 books were collected each year and donated to Readers at Risk for distribution to children throughout the community. TCR partner organizations, Borders Books & Music in Cuyahoga Falls and Boys & Girls Clubs of Summit County, contributed more than 200 and 900 books respectively. Young readers were nominated by schools to be recognized for achievements in improving their reading skills and scores. Each year, several students led the stadium of 7,000+ fans in group reading and others were able to announce an inning or to be interviewed live on the radio during the game. The recognized students and their families enjoyed the game from the team loge with refreshments provided by the Aeros. For many families, this was the first time they attended a baseball game in the stadium. Reading activities were provided throughout the stadium by TCR Partners and sponsorship dollars recognized partners and provided operating support to TCR. For several years, the Aeros have also sponsored an *Akron Summit County Public Library Night at the Aeros* to connect families with the library and the importance of reading.

■ **The Akron Art Museum** started an annual event in 2005 — *The Get Caught Reading Photo Contest* encouraged area schools to support student photographers to catch readers with their cameras! The event was very popular and the winning photos were displayed at the This City Reads Night at the Aeros game. The Akron Beacon Journal published winning photos throughout the year in the paper and a special recognition reception was held for the 12 winners.

■ **The Akron Civic Theater** launched “The Akron Reading Festival”, a new annual event in September 2005 which drew 3,094 people, 30 authors, and 25 community organization booths. A community-based team fostered collaborative planning and promotion including a close partnership with the Our Lady of the Elms Author Series.

■ **Character Counts! Akron** hosted a Tuesday night reading event each week in the month of October, National Character Counts month, at Main Library. New books were distributed to participants.

■ The **Shaw Jewish Community Center** holds the *Shabbat Bag Family Education Project* during the weekly holiday of Shabbat to promote family time, reading activities, journaling and fun. *Messy Night* is held in November during which recipes are written, illustrated and demonstrated by students. *D.E.A.R. Time*, or Drop Everything And Read, is a daily routine at the JCC.

■ The **Summit Educational Link for Families (S.E.L.F.) Even Start Program**, in celebration of National Family Literacy Day, hosted a *Family Reading and Literacy Night* at Woodridge Primary School. Ninety families (with over 300 children) shared inner and family reading time, enjoyed a storyteller, and took home bags of reading goodies.

INDICATOR FOUR

Use literacy as a companion for TV

■ **Akron Public Schools** *Ask Gilby* program airs three times a day on Time Warner TV 15 and reaches sixty percent of Akron’s viewers, with a potential audience of 130,000 households each time it airs.

■ **Akron Public Schools** *Ask Gilby* also airs every Wednesday on WOAC-67 at 10:00 a.m. with a potential audience of 1.3 million households throughout Cleveland, Akron and Canton.

■ **Akron Public Schools** *Ask Gilby* educational outreach program has 18 volunteers who take Gilby out to the community for live appearances.

■ **Akron Public Schools’** award winning *Super Small Tales* program, which airs weekdays on Time Warner APS TV 15, invited numerous community leaders to read to elementary school children. Last year the program featured these readers: Dr. Sylvester Small, APS Superintendent, Dan Colantone/Greater Akron Chamber, William Considine/Akron Children’s Hospital, Malcolm Costa/Akron Summit County Action, Inc., Theresa Carter/Omnova Foundation, and Nick Browning/FirstMerit.

INDICATOR FIVE

Increase the number of workplace literacy programs

- **Kids-Play, Inc.** was awarded a grant from the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services to create Literacy Study groups for employees at each location. Teachers meet weekly to discuss literacy development in young children and supportive activities. Within a study group context, participants engage in reflective practice, review and discuss current research, and support one another's implementation of new knowledge and skills in the classroom.
- **Shaw Jewish Community Center** has instituted a staff and parent training program associated with An Ethical Start[®], a value-based emergent curriculum based upon the teachings of the Mishna and Torah.

GOAL THREE: CONNECT INDIVIDUALS/ FAMILIES WITH RESOURCES

LIBRARY INDICATORS

- Library card registration**
- Adult and juvenile books checked out**
- Summer reading program participants**
- Pre-school programs**
- Other programs**

The Akron-Summit County Public Library system and the following independent libraries—Barberton Public Library, Cuyahoga Falls Library, Twinsburg Library, Hudson Library & Historical Society, Peninsula Library & Historical Society, and Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library—in Summit County report:

- Library Card Registration: 68,988
- Adult Books Checked Out: 1,972,056
- Juvenile/Teen Books Checked Out: 1,559,777
- Summer Reading Program Participants: 16,097
- Pre-School Programs: 14,896

Other programs that were reported include:

- The Akron Summit County Public Library (ASCPL) presented 2,775 programs for children with literacy impact reaching over 80,000 children.
- ASCPL sponsored 33 book discussion groups with 413 participants.

- Over 1600 people participated in 188 computer classes sponsored by ASCPL.
- Barberton Public Library offered 86 children and teen programs, 37 adult programs, 12 history sessions and 13 computer programs.
- Cuyahoga Falls Library offered a *Reading Café* for the week of Children’s Book Week. Adult programming included Monday Night Mysteries, Let’s Talk About Books, the Truly Madly Deeply Romance Book Club, a Young Adult Summer Reading Program, and a Read Banned Books Program. In all, 452 sessions attracted 6,055 adults, 144 outreach sessions worked with 7,150 children, and 74 computer classes reached 429 people. GED and tutoring sessions reached 315 adults.
- Peninsula Library gave away 260 books at three programs which attracted 140 students and 94 adults—the Halloween program, Literacy Night at Woodridge Primary School, and at 24 Homeschool Art classes. Children’s Monthly Craft programs welcomed 105 participants and 95 tutoring sessions reaching 95 adults and 95 children.
- Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library served 312 people with Adult & Teen book discussion groups.
- Summit Academy Schools reported that 41 students in their elementary school have a library card. Students visit Main Library and the Goodyear Branch at least twice a month.

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY INDICATORS

- Tutoring for reading and other subjects**
- Tutor training**
- Availability of newspapers and magazines**
- Increase reading time**
- Number of books read**
- Reading through use of technology**
- Adults seek ways to increase their literacy and their children’s (family literacy/GED)**

■ The **Akron Urban League** offers the School’s In Program, which served 92 at risk youth between the ages of 16 and 21. The program assists students to increase their level of literacy by preparing them for the GED. Partnering with the Akron Beacon Journal made it possible to provide daily newspapers to students during the School’s In Program and to 130 children during Summer Enrichment Day Camp.

■ In July 2005, **Project: LEARN of Summit County** received increased funding from the Ohio Department of Education to expand its services. As a result, 9 new instructional sites, called Family Learning Centers, have been opened in Akron, Barberton, Green, Cuyahoga Falls, and Twinsburg. Instructional centers now offer 45 classes per week. More students are able to pursue Pre-GED and GED level classes at the centers. Since 2002, Project: LEARN has increased service by 42%. Following the launch of This City Reads!, the organization had a 66% increase in services provided in the first quarter of 2004 and a 100% increase in referrals to other

agencies. In 2005, Project: LEARN served 1,025 students. This number exceeded projections by 145 students. Overall, 48.5% of all students advanced to the next educational functioning level and 85% progressed toward their goals as measured by standardized test or portfolio evaluation. Volunteers provided 6,170 hours of instruction to Project: LEARN students.

■ **Akron Summit Community Action, Inc. Head Start** offered a parent education program in October 2005 called Families Turn to Learn, in which 100 parents received the Akron Beacon Journal, a promotion which began in October 2005. From September to December 2005, 40 Head Start parents were referred to GED programs through Akron Public Basic and Literacy Education or Project: LEARN of Summit County.

■ **Akron Summit Community Action, Inc. YouthBuild** trainees were required to read and summarize an article from the Akron Beacon Journal daily. Trainees took the newspaper home every day. The program has incorporated a GED program to help 34 trainees increase literacy skills and be prepared to take the exam. In 2005, 11 trainees obtained their GED and 6 graduates enrolled in post-secondary education.

■ **Summit Family & Children First Council's Help Me Grow** parents obtained their GED's as part of their Individualized Family Service Plans. Parents are encouraged to visit the library to check out books for themselves and their children by providing incentives.

■ **Kids-Play, Inc.** sites have created literacy resource and reading areas for parents and computer programs to assist in the development of reading skills.

■ **Project AGAPE** served 174 children through tutoring delivered by 20 adult tutors. The program incorporates The 100 Book Challenge with a goal of children reading at least 15 minutes a day. Incentives are given for progress to each step level. The summer program provides age appropriate lists of books for children to read with a goal of reading 10 books a month.

■ The **Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron** launched the Heifer Project Read to Feed project this fall. Forty-five children read 600 books to raise over \$1,000 for the international project that purchases livestock to build sustainable communities.

■ Twenty-four **Summit Academy** elementary school students receive individual and/or small group tutoring from volunteers from University Park Nursing Home, National City Bank, Summit County Sheriff's Department. Parents also participate as tutors. Students participate in the Book Club that meets before school and in Silent Sustained Reading after school. The Akron Beacon Journal is distributed and read daily in classrooms and students take newspapers home to share with their families. The schools subscribe to Time Magazine for Kids, Teen Newsweek, Teen National Geographic, Current Events, and Popular Science, which are powerful reading resources for classroom work. Summit Academy Schools participate in Pizza Hut's Book It program and every elementary school student is writing a book which will be published in hardcover. Proceeds from two Scholastic Book Fairs are used to provide books to students in need.

■ **Shaw Jewish Community Center** reaches 20 students per grading period who work with tutors. The Center welcomed 10 senior adult readers and 10 Lippman Day School students to read to pre-school students. Pre-school students, ages 3-5, participate in a weekly computer lab and families participate in “Tzedakah” (doing the right thing) activities year round which are always introduced, reinforced and enhanced with literacy.

■ The **Summit Educational Link for Families (S.E.L.F.) Even Start Program** adult and early childhood classrooms are equipped with computers and a wide variety of technology based literacy activities are offered. Weekly Parenting Empowerment Coffee meetings work with parents to encourage and support their role using interactive literacy activities in home and school settings.

CHILD INDICATORS

Children attending preschool

Children being read to or reading to someone

Children owning books at home (i.e. distribution #'s and program tracking)

Out of school literacy experiences

■ **See Goal One for pre-school information**

■ The first Akron Reading Festival, sponsored by the **Akron Civic Theatre** distributed approximately 2,000 new books to children in attendance.

■ **Akron Summit Community Action Head Start, Inc. and Early Head Start** promote family literacy through “Parent and Child Together Time.” Activities are sent home regularly to encourage parents to read to their children.

■ **Akron Summit Community Action, Inc. YouthBuild** trainees engaged in community service by reading to local Head Start children - 18 trainees read to 170 children.

■ **Akron Summit Community Action, Inc.** Barberton Outreach Program field site distributed more than 200 books and magazines.

■ The **Akron YMCA**’s new “Read, Write & Create” program distributed 48 books to participating students. The program increases reading time, encourages older children to read to younger ones, distributes books to children for use at home, and provides out-of-school literacy experiences.

■ The **Akron Urban League** offers an After School Enrichment Program for children ages 5-12 that served 38 children. Every other week, a librarian visits the children and leads a book discussion on a book she assigned two weeks prior. Children visit the library throughout the year. The organization distributed 311 books in the After-School Enrichment Program, during Summer Enrichment Day Camp, and the Dining with Santa Event. Fifteen employees participated in the United Way Read To Me Day, reading to students in 19 classrooms.

- For the second year at **This City Reads! Night at the Aeros**, over 3,000 new and gently used books were donated in exchange for a ticket to the game.
- **Borders Books & Music** of Cuyahoga Falls initiated new literacy-based activities for children and their families during the months following the This City Reads! Night at the Aeros, including storytimes for pre-school children and book clubs focused on science fiction for older students.
- **Character Counts! Akron** distributed more than 800 new books through the Character in Literacy program.
- **Green Local Schools** distributed 300 books in before and after school programs. In the district's K-1 building, a Community Reader program provided books to a small group of children each week who met with a community member who read to them.
- **Summit Family & Children First Council's** Help Me Grow provided books to 3,826 children in their program.
- At least three times a year, **Kids-Play Akron** distributes books for children to take home. All Kids-Play sites sponsor book fairs to allow parents to purchase books at reduced prices and for the centers to earn new books for their classrooms. Other programs included: Guest Readers, Kids-Play Summer camp school age children coupons from local eateries for every ten books read, and participation in the Pizza Hut Book It Program.
- **Project AGAPE** distributed over 1,000 books to program participants and attendees at parades and festivals.
- The **Peninsula Library** distributed 260 books to program participants.
- **Readers at Risk**, an organization that accepts donated books and prepares them to gift to individual children, distributed over 27,000 books to individuals, schools, and agencies that requested books for child ownership. (Many of these groups are This City Reads! partners.)
- **Shaw Jewish Community Center** sponsors Kids Fair[®], which distributed 15,000 books. (Note: about 5,000 of the books came from Readers at Risk) Families received Clifford magazines and discounted magazine subscriptions were made available. Classrooms participated in the 100 Book Challenge and a culminating celebration was held during Jewish Book Month with a celebrity author.
- **Summit Educational Link for Families (S.E.L.F.)** Even Start Program received a Target Stores community grant to begin intergenerational cultural and community excursions, reading materials and home based literacy lessons. WNEO PBS Channels 45/49, through the Ready to Read grant, provides books that are given to families during monthly home-based literacy lessons. During a seven-week summer enrichment program, families participate in literacy-based educational field trips every Friday.
- Total books collected/distributed—48,745

GOAL FOUR: CHAMPION THE COLLABORATIVE MODEL

INDICATORS

TCR partners (See attached list)

Event sponsors

New and leveraged partnerships

Honorary Co-chair Bill Considine challenged the partners to use “the power of collaboration” to make This City Reads work. That collaboration is reflected in the following reported activities and items related to other indicators in First Report. Honorary Co-Chair Reverend Ronald Fowler charged the partners to “aim high, pay the price, and stay the course.”

■ **Akron Summit Community Action, Inc. YouthBuild** Program partnered with Akron Public School Adult Basic & Literacy Education (ABLE) to provide GED training to 34 at risk young adults age 18-24 to increase their literacy and numeric skills. Average attendance was seven hours a day, twice a week for 20 weeks.

■ **Akron Public Schools’** award winning *Super Small Tales* program, which airs on Time Warner TV 15, invited numerous community leaders to read a book to elementary school children. APS’s popular reading televised program, *Gilby*, has been purchased by PBS and will air in other communities. Both programs are produced by volunteers from throughout the community.

■ The **Akron Area YMCA** received a grant in 2005 from “The National Endowment for the Arts” to introduce “Read, Write, Create” in nine after school programs. The program, created in collaboration with The University of Akron, Kent State University, the Akron Summit County Public Library, the Akron Beacon Journal and Central Hower High School reached 249 children with 39 service learning students. The six-week curriculum consists of a read-aloud and activities such as writing a bio-poem, writing a letter to the editor, writing stories about families, and creative story writing. A newspaper and a book of student bio-poems were published and celebrated at an event at the Main Library with students, their families and the collaborating organizations. A great program outcome is that older children began to help younger children with words they did not know rather than make fun of them. One student service learner said that their experience in the program “changed my life.”

■ **Akron Children’s Hospital** Reach Out & Read program works closely with The University of Akron to place service learners as volunteer readers in pediatric physician waiting rooms throughout the region. Pediatric staff also refer families to Project: LEARN of Summit County or a local library to enhance family literacy skills.

■ **Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority’s (AMHA)** new SMART START Program targets children pre-school through third grade, providing opportunities for children and their parents to value and enjoy learning, especially reading. The pilot program at Summit Lake Apartments is successful in large part, due to the high level of collaboration among This City Reads! Partners

including the Akron-Summit County Public Library, Akron Public Schools, Project: LEARN of Summit County, Character Counts! Akron, and ASCA HeadStart. These organizations have assisted in planning and facilitating programs for children and their parents and they have linked AMHA to new resources. Older children (5th grade through high school) who live at Summit Lake Apartments are trained as tutors and homework helpers, consistent with Akron Public Schools academic standards. Younger children receive at least one tutoring session a week. Tutors receive \$5 per session with four of every five dollars put aside for the student to purchase an item they have chosen as a goal. When children improve grades, attendance, or knowledge, receive rewards for good character, or meet the 100 Book Challenge, they receive a \$10 gift certificate from Target Stores. Their parents also receive a card of equal value for the support and encouragement they have provided. Akron Public Schools provided Parent Academy workshops, assistance in training tutors, developing curriculum, and providing on-going support. Two of the 18 school age children made the honor roll, two made the merit roll, three received Good Citizen Awards, and five met the 100-Book Challenge. Character Counts! Akron, The Akron Beacon Journal Newspapers in Education, Akron Summit County Public Library, Akron Summit Community Action Head Start, Project LEARN, and others have participated in AMHA Back to School Celebrations and school supply giveaways. The University of Akron helps AMHA to plan for and supply service learners for literacy and homework help programs. Akron Public Schools brought first graders to AMHA senior housing buildings to read with residents.

■ **Borders Books & Music** in Cuyahoga Falls collaborated with Project: LEARN of Summit County to host activities associated with the Harry Potter series. The store also donated items to other TCR partner organizations for literacy-based programs including Summit Education Initiative, Akron Area YMCA, Peninsula Library, Project: LEARN, Child Guidance Centers, CSBMR/DD and various schools. Store staff regularly provided assistance with age-appropriate materials for literacy-based programs such as Building Hope in the City and Help Me Grow.

■ **Character Counts! Akron** reached children in a weekly reading event at Main Library during the month of October while their parents were participating in Project: LEARN tutoring at the same time. Working with The University of Akron (Character in Literacy Program), 10 service learners were placed for reading tutoring to approximately 150 children. CC Akron! also established relationships with the Cleveland CAVS and Pizza Hut to provide incentives for reading.

■ **Project: LEARN of Summit County** invited AMHA children to their grand opening celebration of the Read to Achieve Center with the Cleveland Cavaliers.

■ **Project AGAPE** has successfully replicated a national literacy model in over 60 sites around Ohio.

AKRONREADS

AkronReads is a partnership between schools, businesses, parents, and individuals. Once a week, volunteers from businesses and the community provide one-on-one tutoring to students in Akron Public Schools during the school day. The mission of Akron Reads and Ohio Reads is to ensure that all children are reading at grade level by the end of elementary school. Specifically, AkronReads prepares students to pass the Third Grade Reading Achievement Test.

In the 2004–05 school year, AkronReads reached 1,246 students with 784 tutors, including 437 business and 311 community volunteers. In the 2001–02 school year, Kent State University conducted an evaluation of the program and found parents, teachers and tutors rated their experiences very favorably. First and second grade students were given the developmental reading assessment along with a comparison group of non-participants at the beginning and end of the year. On the post-test, all of the students showed improvement, but the AkronReads students improved more. Parent participation is critical to the success of AkronReads. Some become tutors and all receive books to read with their children. Twenty-nine partner organizations participated.

Akron Auto Club	Lockheed Martin Maritime Systems & Sensors
Akron Beacon Journal	Malcolm Pirnie, Inc.
Akron Children's Hospital	National City Bank
Akron Civic Theater	OMNOVA Solutions
Akron General Medical Center	PSI Associates
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority	Roadway Group
Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP	Scanlon & Gearing Co, LPA
City of Akron	State Farm Insurance
First Energy	Summa Health System
FirstMerit	Summit County Juvenile Court
The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.	United Way of Summit Co.
GPD Group	The University of Akron
Greenleaf Family Center	Virtual Hold Technology
Kaiser Permanente	Weber Tax Service
Key Bank	

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Become a This City Reads! Partner

The power of This City Reads! is in partnering with dozens of organizations to leverage relationships, resources and ideas. A partnership agreement that requires participation in the Annual Day of Reading can be signed by any organization. Call 330.643.9099, visit www.thiscityreads.org or speak to a partner to get more information on how you can connect with others throughout the year to leverage your resources.

Join with AkronReads

If your organization is able to release employees to tutor Akron Public School students once a week for an hour, consider participation with AkronReads. Call 330.761.2809 to get more information.

Do Your Part to Prepare Our Community's Pre-Schoolers

When the Ohio Department of Education releases Kindergarten Readiness Assessment on Literacy results, This City Reads! will develop strategies to engage the community to support pre-school age children in areas that show need for improvement. Look for information from This City Reads! Partners, on the This City Reads! website and in the media this year.

Get A Library Card And Use It

Residents of Summit County are fortunate to have access to one of the best library systems in the country. Let's challenge ourselves to use our wonderful libraries. If you or your children don't have a library card, get one. It's free.

Help An Adult Learn To Read

If you know an adult who needs help with literacy skills, take the initiative to connect them with Project: LEARN of Summit County. If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity, tutoring an adult on their journey to learn to read can be a rewarding experience. Call 330.434.9461 to change another life and to change your own.

Volunteer

If you see the activities of an organization in this report that interests you, call to volunteer. A list of This City Reads! Partners is included in this report.

Connect With Resources

First Report was written to inform our community of the resources that are available for all Summit County citizens. If you have children, enroll them in programs that you believe will help them improve their reading. Seek out family programs and opportunities for you and your children to celebrate the joy of reading. Help an adult find resources if they can't read.

Build A Culture of Reading

In your own home, choose reading. Create reading routines - reading the newspaper in the morning and reading to your children at night. Create and attend reading activities and events. Interact with children you meet in a way that helps them build reading skills.

Watch For How You Can Participate With This City Reads! Activities

Read the Akron Beacon Journal and other community newspapers, check the This City Reads! website at www.thiscityreads.org and look for information at This City Reads! Partner programs to get up to date information on activities, events and ideas.

THIS CITY READS! PARTNERS

Signed Agreements on file as of February 1, 2006 (55)

AAA Akron Auto Club	Green Local Schools
Akron Aeros	Goodwill Industries
Akron Art Museum	HM Life Opportunities Services
Akron Beacon Journal	The Hudson Library & Historical Society
Akron Community Foundation	Immaculate Heart of Mary School
Akron Area YMCA	Jumpstart-Akron
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority	Kids Play Akron
Akron Public Schools	The Learned Owl Book Shop (Hudson)
Akron Summit Community Action, Inc.	Lighthouse Academy
Akron-Summit County Public Library	Project AGAPE
Akron Urban League	Peninsula Library & Historical Society
Arlington Church of God	Project: LEARN of Summit County
Barnes and Noble (Montrose)	Revere Local Schools
Barberton Public Library	The Salvation Army
The Blue Heron Bookstore (Peninsula)	SELF-Even Start Family Literacy Program
Boys & Girls Clubs of Summit County	Springfield Local School District
Borders Books & Music (Cuyahoga Falls)	Shaw Jewish Community Center
Character Counts! Akron	Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library
Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron	Summit Academy Schools
City of Akron	Summit County Domestic Relations Court
County of Summit	Summit County Children's Services Board
Coventry Local Schools	Summit County Job & Family Services
Cuyahoga Falls City Schools	Summit Education Initiative
Cuyahoga Falls Library	The University of Akron
Enjoy Café	Unitarian Universalist Church of Akron
Family & Children First Council/ Help Me Grow	United Way of Summit County
The Greater Akron Chamber	Urban Ounce of Prevention Services
Greater Bethel Community Development Center	

The information in this report has been provided by This City Reads! Partner organizations.