



SEPTEMBER 20, 2017 BY ABBEY UNRUH

## Innovative grant leads to program growth in Fox Cities

Since 2015, the Appleton Public Library (APL) has partnered with the Fox Cities' medical community and all local public libraries in an effort to expand local participation in Reach Out and Read (ROR). APL is recognized by ROR National Center as a community partner in the support and expansion of Reach Out and Read. These efforts have been granted the designation, ROR Partners – Fox Cities. This group works closely with ROR Wisconsin staff to achieve its goals and maintain high quality program standards.

The ongoing work of ROR Partners – Fox Cities is made possible through an innovative grant from the United Way Fox Cities, which is the result of generous support from community donors.

The Fox Cities' community keeps the child the focus of this unique effort. With the goal of reaching every child in the Fox Cities through a regional effort, ROR Partners – Fox Cities works together to encourage parents to read aloud daily to their infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Daily reading aloud is a simple and effective way of fostering nurturing, language-rich family interactions that support brain development and provide a foundation for success.

So how has this unique, regional collaboration impacted the growth of ROR in the Fox Cities' community? During the past 2 years:

- More than 21,000 books have been handed out to children ages 6 months to 5 years during their well-visits
- 92 healthcare providers have been trained in early literacy promotion and have been encouraging and supporting parents as their child's first and most important teacher
- 13 medical clinics have launched their own ROR programs

- Eight public libraries support their closest ROR clinic by keeping them stocked with gently-used books, providing library programming information, and overall literacy support
- Five major health systems and multiple independent clinics are currently working together to secure long-term funding for the work of ROR Partners – Fox Cities
- Four local businesses have supported the ROR efforts by hosting very successful internal book drives
- Two literacy-rich environments have been created at medical clinics to be used as examples in the community of what a literacy-rich waiting room or child's reading area could look like

Since the collaboration began, ROR Partners – Fox Cities' providers and families have been surveyed annually. This survey tracks changes in the behaviors and attitudes towards reading as well as to maintain fidelity to the ROR model.

During the next 18 months of the innovative grant, a committee will work to ensure ROR Partners – Fox Cities remains active in the community for years to come.

Is your community interested in launching a similar effort?  
Here are a few tips:

- Engage a healthcare provider who is also deeply invested in our youth and has a love of reading. They can help you champion the program in the community
- Involve your local public library! They understand the importance of early literacy and may be able to partner with you
- Educate your local United Way or community foundation on what ROR is all about! It's important to show them the difference between ROR and other early literacy programs. ROR is not just a book giveaway but a clinical intervention which changes families reading behaviors. Bring along a copy of the published, peer reviewed, national research on ROR
- Consider hosting ROR Wisconsin's medical director, Dr. Navsaria for an event and invite all key community contacts
- Check with ROR Wisconsin staff if your community efforts qualify for the ROR Partners designation.

Still have questions? Feel free to contact ROR Partners – Fox Cities program coordinator: Abbey Unruh at [aunruh@apl.org](mailto:aunruh@apl.org) or 920-832-5821.



Mosaic Family Health's literacy-rich waiting room created by Appleton Public Library



Librarians from Appleton Public Library