

**Name of Program:** Leading to Reading

**Program Goals:**

- To provide books for children from low and moderate income families
- To enhance parent skills related to reading success
- To increase AAUW visibility within the community

**Mission:**

The project is directly related to our focus on equity. Children who experience a print-rich environment and develop critical language skills from birth to age 5 have a greater chance of success in school. The project enhances educational programs within the community while providing philanthropic opportunities for members, community organizations and tweens who take part.

**Target Audience/Support for community needs:**

Leading to Reading works with agencies serving low and moderate income families. Currently we provide books, community readers, literacy celebrations, and parent information to 20 agencies throughout Dutchess County and some parts of Ulster County. The focus is on the cities of Poughkeepsie and Beacon and the eastern part of Dutchess County where there are greater pockets of families living in poverty. The project serves those families who have few books at home or have limited access to public libraries.

**Community Partners:**

We provide books and literacy activities to the following agencies: Astor Early Childhood Programs (Poughkeepsie, Wappingers Falls, Beacon, Amenia, Dover Plains, Red Hook), Hyde Park Universal Pre-K program, Community Family Development Center, Catharine Street Community Center, Tubman Terrace Academic Skills Program, Grace Smith House, Vassar Brothers Medical Center, Hudson River Lodging, Children's Home of Poughkeepsie Emergency Shelter, Rural and Migrant Ministry, Book Buddies (Literacy Connections), AgriBusiness Child Development Center, House of Hope, and Abilities First. We work in conjunction with the Astor Early Childhood Programs, Poughkeepsie Day School, Friends of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District, and Mid-Hudson Children's Museum.

Community support has been provided by: Adams Fairacre Farms, Friends of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District, the Manor at Woodside, Kohl's Associates in Action, AAUW Cuisine Interest Group, Wappingers Congress of Teachers, Enterprise Process Servers, and Books for Kids. We have been approached by Barnes and Noble to be the focus of their holiday book drive.

**Member Participation:**

104 members are on the volunteer list for Leading to Reading to attend work sessions, serve as community readers, or take part in our activities. There are 58 members who serve on the planning committee to determine yearly events, community partners, and funding opportunities.

**Sustainability:**

The project should easily be maintained for the next several years. Community support for the project has been growing, and we continue to receive requests for books and suggestions for

collaborations. Member enthusiasm has remained high and a number of members have joined AAUW so that they can take part in the project. The funding base has also increased recently.

**Benchmarks of Success:**

The project was started in 2004 and has continued to grow. The number of community collaborations has increased, over 29,000 books have been distributed, and community readers are involved in several new centers this year. We established a community reader program at the Mid Hudson Children's Museum. Our newest outreach is a joint project with the Friends of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District to place crates of books in places where children spend time waiting, such as Laundromats and Family Court. The first set of books will be delivered in May.