

What's New in the Rogue Valley Area

Serving Jackson and Josephine counties



SMART NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2021

Thanks All Around!

SMART Reading wouldn't be possible without our incredible community. In this year of so many changes and new challenges, we've been awed by the commitment and support of our volunteers, donors, educators, and partners who stand alongside us to bring a love of reading and learning to local kids. Thank you for being part of our family!

Sponsor A SMART School in Rogue Valley

Our School Sponsors make a direct impact on a school in our community by providing the financial support and often the employee volunteers to help SMART Reading students thrive. Huge thanks to these local sponsors:

- Asante
- Boise Cascade
- Harry & David
- James and Shirley Rippey Family Foundation
- Knife River
- KOBI NBC5
- Kogap Industries
- Lithia, Inc.
- Medford Fabrication
- MODA
- Professional Transportation Services, Inc.
- Providence
- Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oregon
- Rogue Disposal & Recycling
- Rogue Valley Manor
- Rotary Club of Medford



A student at Jewett Elementary in Central Point proudly shows off one of the books he received from SMART Reading.

Celebrating Our Local Volunteer of the Year

Phoenix Elementary Site Coordinator Kathy Sager was named the Rogue Valley's 2020-21 Volunteer of the Year! Kathy has been a dedicated volunteer for more than six years, stepping up to coordinate a program, recruiting volunteers, and helping out in our office. When the devastating wildfires tore through Phoenix and Talent,

Kathy was there to help us get books to kids who lost their homes, giving away more than 1,000 books over two weekends. Thank you, Kathy, for everything you do for SMART Reading!



Community Comes Together for Oregon Reads Aloud

The Rogue Valley was well-represented in SMART Reading's statewide celebration and fundraiser held in February. Our portion of the read-a-thon included stories read by Brian Gross, Blakley McHugh, Bethany Quitt, Tom Wang, Meghan McCandless, Anna Brewer, Hailey Chang, Shannon Clooney, Mia Brewer, Matt Jordan, Andy Truong, Lisa Duong, and Kyle Averman. Big thanks to everyone who tuned in, gave, and helped make the event a huge success. Thanks as well to these local sponsors:



2020-21 Local Impact



37 Sites



2,044 Students



17,677 Books Given

Rogue Valley Area Staff:

Julie Brimble, Area Manager | Mindy Alford, Program Manager | Barbara Pugh, Program Manager



Dear Friends:

I hope this finds you healthy and well. It's been a busy time for us here at SMART Reading. After 30 years of delivering our services in person, the pandemic forced us to redesign our programming to meet students in the virtual learning landscape. With a huge dose of creativity, flexibility, and never losing sight of our North Star — the children we serve — our statewide team has developed new programming that allows us to continue fulfilling

our mission in a virtual space. Although the 2021-22 school year will look different than years' past, we will continue to serve our educator partners with our tried and true model of 1) book distribution and 2) individualized reading support. To provide the latter, we've added three new virtual delivery models to our programming, which we piloted this year and will launch in the coming school year.

I want to underscore that **one-on-one, in-person reading has always been at the heart of our model**, and this will continue to be the mainstay of our program. However, given the limitations of the pandemic era, we had to adapt to stay relevant and continue serving our students when they needed us most. I know our volunteers are eager for the day they can sit side-by-side with their students again. Rest assured, we'll do this as soon as we can. There's still much we don't know about the 2021-22 school year and things continue to evolve; you'll read more in this newsletter about what's ahead and what we know now about opportunities to engage with us.

On a personal note, I'd like to take this opportunity to share some big news in my life. After a decade as the executive director of SMART Reading, I will be retiring in June 2022. Leading this organization has been one of the greatest joys and adventures of my life, and it's with immense gratitude and fondness that I share this news and enter the final year of my work here. Our Board of Directors has formed a search committee to lead the process of hiring the next executive director. Their work over the past few months and through the summer will lead to a formal launch of the search in October, with the aim to name a successor in the spring.

Thank you for your partnership and support — always, and especially over this last year. I am grateful for our broad community across the state helping us to continue to spark joy and opportunity through the magic of a shared book.

With appreciation,



Chris Otis

2020-21 Statewide Impact



284 Sites



574 Volunteers



17,824 Students



140,778 Books Given



10,864 Volunteer Hours

Executive Staff:

Chris Otis
Executive Director

Jessica Bowersox
Deputy Director

Afrita Davis
Program Director

Zack Frey
Director of Quality Assurance and Data Management

Amanda Green
Director of Finance and Administration

Beth Katona
Director of Development

Board of Directors:

Anna Madill
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Becky Tymchuk

Becky Versteeg

Ari Wubbold

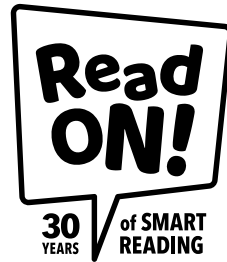
Read On! 30 Years of SMART Reading

The 2021-22 school year marks the 30th anniversary of SMART Reading! We're excited to commemorate three decades of bringing the joy of books and reading to kids throughout Oregon, and we're celebrating with some fun activities.

- **SMART Art:** To celebrate the imaginative, transformative power of books in children's lives, we're commissioning a series of public art murals in communities we serve across the state. Artists across the state can apply through our Request for Proposal (RFP). We hope to begin installation of the murals later this summer.

- **Literacy Summits:** This fall, we'll convene a group of education and policy leaders to discuss the state of early literacy in Oregon and share strategies for supporting reading development and social-emotional learning for our state's youngest students. In spring 2022, we'll hold a second session focused on the importance of diversity in children's books.

To learn more about the 30th anniversary celebration, to access the RFP for artists, or to volunteer your wall space for a mural, please visit www.SMARTReading.org/30th-anniversary.



Calling All SMARTies!

If you or someone you know was in the SMART Reading program as a child, we'd love to hear about your experience as part of our 30th anniversary celebration. If you were in the program as a child and would like to share your story, please send us an email with your contact information to SMART@SMARTReading.org.



Service Offerings in 2021-22

We are continually reassessing when we can return to in-person service following recent guidance from the Oregon Department of Education, and with more expected later this summer. At this stage, we plan to provide virtual services through December 2021 and explore returning in person in January.

We'll be in conversation with our educator partners soon about what service will look like at their site next year and what best meets their needs. Our primary offerings in the fall will include book distribution plus one or more of our virtual reading engagement alternatives:

- **Virtual SMART:** The closest to our traditional in-person model, Virtual SMART is a personalized reading experience that connects one student with two volunteers for weekly sessions on Zoom or Google Meet to read together using our Virtual Storyroom. Virtual SMART is the only new adaptation that will be adopted as a permanent delivery model.
- **Classroom Read-Alouds:** In order to provide reading

support to as many kids as possible, our Classroom Read-Aloud model pairs a volunteer with a classroom for regular group read-alouds using a virtual meeting platform.

- **Pen Pal:** The relationships that form between SMART Reading students and their volunteers are one of the most valuable aspects of our work. Our Pen Pal program provides an opportunity for kids and volunteers to connect by exchanging letters about what they are reading.

Book distribution also includes access to **SMART Storytime**, an online recorded video library of some of our favorite books being read by SMART Reading volunteers.

Given the changing landscape, we don't expect to be able to re-engage all of our volunteers again right away, but we will keep our community informed as we know more about our needs later in the summer. Please visit www.SMARTReading.org/Volunteer for updates on opportunities in 2021-22.

Supporting SMART

With nearly 100 percent of our funding contributed from private sources, we rely on the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations for the vital resources we need to serve Oregon kids. Here are some ways you can support SMART financially:

- ▶ Join the **SMART Book Club** by becoming a sustaining monthly donor. Just as our volunteers show up each week for our students, monthly donors provide critical ongoing support by showing up consistently for kids with their contributions. Visit www.SMARTReading.org/Donate to sign up.
- ▶ Shop SMART:
 - ▶ **Fred Meyer:** Link your rewards card to SMART Reading at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. Search for us by our nonprofit number: UW793.
 - ▶ **Amazon:** Select SMART Reading as your charity at www.smile.amazon.com and 0.5% of your purchase will be a gift to SMART Reading.
 - ▶ **Powell's:** Purchase books on SMART Reading's wishlist and have them shipped directly to us. Visit www.bit.ly/PowellsBookshelf (URL is case sensitive) to learn more.
 - ▶ **Metolius Tea:** Our friends at Metolius Tea have created a special SMART Tea Box and they're donating the proceeds to SMART Reading. Each box includes a bottle of their amazing Metolius Chai, a rotating tea selected from their most popular blends, and a special surprise. Order at www.bit.ly/SMARTTea (URL is case sensitive).

Virtual Fundraiser A Smashing Success

On Feb. 26, SMART Reading friends and supporters came together for Oregon Reads Aloud, a virtual fundraiser and celebration to support SMART Reading programs. The event consisted of an eight-hour read-a-thon featuring special guests from across the state sharing their favorite children's books, and we capped off the day with a live celebration highlighting SMART Reading's continued impact during a year of unprecedented changes and challenges. The event raised over \$688,000 to support our statewide operations. Big thanks to everyone who tuned in, gave, and helped ensure SMART Reading programs will continue to thrive next year and beyond. Thanks as well to our generous statewide sponsors:

Glenn Dahl and Linda Illig



Literacy Resources for Families

If you're looking for fun ideas to keep literacy front and center for your young readers this summer, visit our website at www.SMARTReading.org/Families for free reading resources and downloads like Summer Reading Bingo, a kids book review activity and more.



Celebrating Our Statewide Volunteer of the Year

Congratulations to Marc Kane of Klamath Falls on being named our 2020-21 Statewide Volunteer of the Year. Marc played an integral role in bringing SMART Reading to the Klamath Basin in 1992 and he's been actively involved as a Reader, Leadership Council member, ambassador, and fundraiser ever since. He brings immense effort, energy and care to everything he does for SMART Reading, and we're so grateful for his many contributions. Congratulations, Marc!