

Fact Sheet

The Big Red Bookshelf is a project of United Way of Greater Duluth's Early Literacy Coalition.

- The Big Red Bookshelf program re-circulates gently used children's books back into the community where they are made available free for other families to enjoy. It is based on the Bright Red Bookshelf project that is coordinated by Project READ, a Greater Itasca County Area Initiative.
- In this community book-sharing program, special red bookshelves are located in a variety of facilities serving families with babies, toddlers and preschoolers. They are stocked with books that have been donated by others in our community.
- The 2009 locations for Big Red Bookshelves include: the Duluth Grill, CHUM, Safe Haven Shelter, the Hermantown Area Family Resource Center, St. Luke's Pediatric Associates and the Duluth WIC office.
- Children visiting a shelf are invited to enjoy books while they are there, and choose one free book to take home and keep.
- The shelves are not meant to replace the Duluth Public Library or local bookstores, which are tremendous resources. Hopefully the Big Red Bookshelf will help many families to start a new routine of daily reading...and once they're hooked, they'll visit the library and bookstores more often – or maybe for the first time – and discover what fun places they are and how much they have to offer our children.
- The red shelves are located in places frequented by families and caregivers of young children, making it as easy as possible to reach them with books and information.
- Donated books should be appropriate for children ages birth to eight. **Board or cloth books are great for babies. Picture books, spy hunt-and-finds, scratch-and-sniff books, pop-up books, lift-the-flap books, easy reader books, and nursery rhymes or song books are also recommended.**
- Please do not donate young adult or teen chapter books, or any book that requires a battery.
- Each one of the Big Red Bookshelves “adopted” by an organization or business, and these folks are the caretakers of the shelf on an ongoing basis. Below is the list of the caretakers for the six shelves that the Big Red Bookshelf currently endorses:
 - CHUM - AFSCME 3801-UMD
 - Safe Haven Shelter – Altrusa International of Duluth, MN
 - Hermantown Area Family Resource Center – Hermantown/Proctor Early Childhood Coalition/Hermantown ECFE PTO
 - St. Luke's Pediatric Associates – Duluth Noon Optimist Club
 - Duluth WIC – Delta Kappa Gamma – Beta Chapter
 - Duluth Grill is cared for by the Duluth Grill Family.

If you or your organization or business would like to get involved, please contact Cheryl Skafté at 218-726-4729 or cskafté@unitedwayduluth.org.

The Early Literacy Coalition, convened by United Way of Greater Duluth, is dedicated to working collaboratively with business, library, health care, education, government, and nonprofit leaders to comprehensively promote the benefits of early literacy development for young children from birth to kindergarten at home, through health care and in the community. The three core objectives of the Early Literacy Coalition are to

- Get books into the hands of children from birth to kindergarten
- Provide parents/caregivers support and resources in their role as a child's first and most important teacher
- Promote community investment in the benefits of early literacy

ABOUT EARLY LITERACY

Unfortunately, many young children do not have regular access to a variety of interesting, colorful books...and many parents and grandparents are not aware that daily reading from birth is so important. But it is very important! In fact, when you read to a child in the first 3 years of life, not only do they learn the meanings of thousands of words they need to know by the time they're in kindergarten, but their brains actually respond by growing bigger.

For example, in the time it takes to read a book like "Goodnight Moon" at bedtime, thousands of new connections are created in a toddler's brain...especially in the parts of the brain that we use when we read, write and communicate. These connections are very important for learning throughout life, and we develop most of the ones we rely upon for language in the first 3 years of life.

It's very important that we make read and talk with our kids as much as possible starting from birth. Many people think that kindergarten is "soon enough" for introducing children to books, but in fact, most of their brain development for using language is finished by the time they're four.

Daily reading is not only enjoyable – although it is a wonderful activity to share – but it also has a direct impact on a child's healthy development like other routine activities...like eating, sleeping, brushing teeth and changing diapers. We need to make it a part of their daily routine, and parents, grandparents, siblings, daycare providers and others can all help.

Books also introduce many new words that children might not otherwise hear in typical conversations. Children need to understand the meanings of thousands of words so they can become good readers in elementary school.

Reading is a fundamental skill that affects how well a child will learn in every subject in school, and it has a major impact on the jobs and other choices and opportunities that will be available to them throughout life. We can prepare our kids for a lifetime of success in reading and learning simply by talking and sharing books together every day in the years before they start school.