



# 2014 & 2015 BIANNUAL REPORT

Improving Lives Through the Power Of Literacy



**BARBARA BUSH**  
HOUSTON LITERACY FOUNDATION

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Neil and Maria Bush, Chairmen, and First Lady Barbara Bush

## HISTORY

In 2013, Neil and Maria Bush established the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation (the Foundation) to deepen the awareness of the importance of literacy and to build capacity across the Houston community to improve literacy rates among people of all ages.

## MISSION

The mission of the Foundation is to improve the quality of life for Houstonians of all ages through the power of literacy—the ability to read, write, speak clearly, and think critically.

## VISION

We envision a thriving city in which every person possesses the literacy skills needed to reach his or her full potential in life, and the cycle of low literacy and poverty among families comes to an end.

*“Everyone deserves the opportunity to reach his or her God-given potential, which is why it is critically important that we attack Houston’s literacy crisis with every resource possible and invest in effective strategies as outlined in Houston’s Literacy Crisis: A Blueprint for Community Action.”*

—NEIL AND MARIA BUSH

## KEY ROLES FOR IMPACT

### INCREASE AWARENESS



Serve as a champion for the literacy cause in Houston by uniting literacy organizations around common messages and consistent data and providing timely and relevant information to the community.

### CONTRIBUTE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



Spawn innovation and issue literacy-focused publications on pertinent topics that inform constituents of effective strategies and tools to increase literacy skill development and achievement levels.

### MOBILIZE VOLUNTEERS



Expand the capacity of school districts, libraries, and nonprofit literacy service providers across Houston to boost literacy rates through the use of volunteers who give of their time and talent.

### INVEST IN COMMUNITY IMPACT



Provide financial and other resources in support of neighborhood-based collective impact efforts that bring together cross-stakeholders focused on improving literacy rates and breaking the cycle of poverty.

# SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR IMPACT



## Foundation Team

**FULL-TIME STAFF** - The leadership team is comprised of five full-time employees who drive implementation of the Foundation's mission and goals.

**VISTAS** - In 2014, the OneStar Foundation awarded a **three-year, \$300,000 grant** to the Foundation to engage five AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) members to support the capacity-building efforts aligned with strategies outlined in the ***Houston's Literacy Crisis: A Blueprint for Community Action***. The VISTAs support the Foundation by mobilizing volunteers, implementing strategies in the communications plan, and fostering partnerships within the community.

**INTERNS** - Several college students and recent college graduates have served as interns—contributing in areas of research, graphic design, and social media.

**VOLUNTEERS** - Volunteers donate time and talent, such as providing pro-bono services, sorting donated books, supporting signature and other events, and planning and participating in literacy activities across the community.



## Partner Network

**LITERACY PARTNERS** - The Foundation's Literacy Partners are comprised of organizations—school districts, library systems, community-based literacy service providers—who are committed to ending the literacy crisis. Every literacy partner relies on the generosity of volunteers to advance its mission and uses the Foundation's volunteer website, **Connect4Literacy.org**, to mobilize and manage literacy-based volunteer opportunities.

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS** - The Foundation's community partners—business, faith, civic, higher education, and others—support the literacy cause by enlisting their employees, members, or students as volunteers in service to literacy partners. Community partners use **Connect4Literacy.org** to find and sign up for meaningful and impactful volunteer activities.



## Affinity Groups

**YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP (YPG)** - The Foundation's Young Professionals Group's motto is to READ. LEAD. SERVE. Members are active in supporting children's literacy efforts by hosting quarterly service projects. They also attend bimonthly social networking events and host the annual **Jungle Book Gala**.

**LADIES FOR LITERACY GUILD** - To continue the literacy legacy of First Lady Barbara Bush, the Ladies for Literacy Guild was created in 2015. Consisting of nearly **100 Founding Members**, this dynamic group of service-oriented women is committed to building home libraries for low-income children, engaging the community in the literacy cause, and raising awareness of the literacy cause through an annual **Power of Literacy** luncheon.



## Technology

Hosted by the Foundation, **Connect4Literacy.org** is Houston's premier website for creating, searching, and signing up for literacy-focused volunteer opportunities in libraries, schools, and nonprofit organizations across Houston.

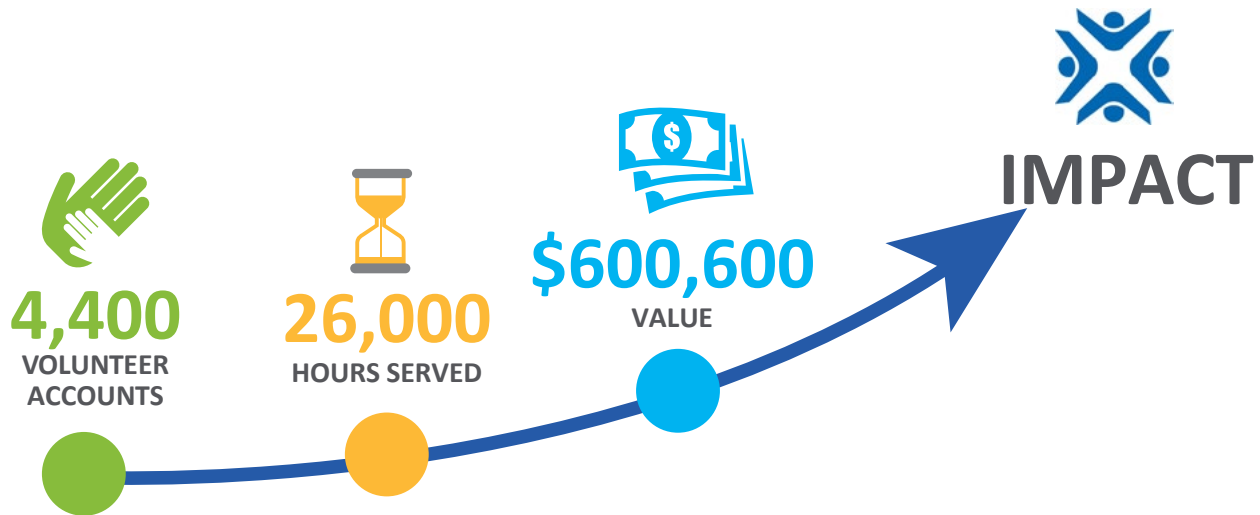


# MOBILIZE VOLUNTEERS



## Volunteers Change Lives

A partnership was forged with **Points of Light**—the largest organization in the world dedicated to volunteerism—to locally implement their **Hands on Connect** volunteer management technology platform. The Foundation branded and launched the system as **Connect4Literacy.org** in October 2014 and has been underwriting the licensing and hosting costs, providing messaging, marketing, and branding, and mobilizing the community to serve as volunteers through opportunities posted online.



*“Our volunteer participation has increased through the support from Connect4Literacy.org. The Houston Public Library system and our friends are so appreciative of the Foundation’s generosity.”*

— DR. RHEA LAWSON, HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR

## Read Across the Globe

Illiteracy is a global issue that impacts **750M+ adults and youth**. This crisis is evidenced right here in Houston, with one in five Houston adults being considered functionally illiterate and one in four Houston schoolchildren lacking the requisite reading skills by the end of the third grade.

To increase awareness of this widespread issue, the Foundation, in partnership with **Points of Light Volunteer Houston and Deloitte**, joined **Read Across the Globe**. This global initiative attempted to break the **Guinness Book of World Records** for the number of children read to in a 24-hour period by an adult. More than **65,000 Houston-area children** in approximately **3,100 classrooms** were read to on October 19, 2015.

*“Spending time in the classroom reminded me of the incredible impact reading makes on children’s lives. Preparing today’s students to be tomorrow’s leaders is critical for the health and vibrancy of our communities.”*

— ANNE TAYLOR, HOUSTON MANAGING PARTNER, DELOITTE LLP



## Houston’s Literacy Crisis: A Blueprint for Community Action



The Foundation, with expertise from Deloitte, convened **100+ community leaders** over seven months to identify Houston’s literacy crisis and develop a plan to boost literacy rates. In April 2014, the Foundation released ***Houston’s Literacy Crisis: A Blueprint for Community Action***, which provides a comprehensive action plan with goals, strategies, and steps to improve literacy rates across all ages.

The ***Blueprint for Community Action*** has helped to unite the community around consistent data portraying the literacy crisis at all age groups, common messaging to raise awareness and elevate the literacy cause as a top priority for the city, and actions all stakeholders groups can take to advance the literacy cause.

**1 in 5**

HOUSTON ADULTS ARE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE

**2 in 5**

HOUSTON YOUTH FAIL READING AND WRITING EXAMS REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION ON FIRST ADMINISTRATION

**1 in 4**

HOUSTON CHILDREN DO NOT MEET MINIMUM READING STANDARDS AT GRADE 3

**3 in 5**

HOUSTON CHILDREN LACK READING-READINESS SKILLS WHEN ENTERING KINDERGARTEN

*“I see people from various sectors come together to make a positive impact on literacy rates in the My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) communities. My staff leaned heavily on the Blueprint to develop the plan for the MBK Initiative because it offers concrete methods to prepare children to enter kindergarten, learn how to read, and become proficient readers by the end of the third grade.”*

— STEPHEN WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR, HOUSTON DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, MY BROTHER’S KEEPER HOUSTON INITIATIVE



## When Students Miss School: The High Cost to Houston

In 2015, the Foundation released ***When Students Miss School: The High Cost to Houston***, a report that demonstrates how absenteeism impacts reading achievement levels. This evidence-based report provides an in-depth look at the problem of chronic absence in Houston, the serious impact, and practical strategies towards a community solution.

More specifically, the report provides a detailed look at chronic absence in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) for the 2014–2015 school year and discusses the impact of poor attendance on student achievement, classroom instruction, and district finances. In HISD, approximately 21,400 students missed 10 percent or more of school during 2014–2015. Furthermore, the comprehensive report illustrates chronic absence issues across grades and demographics, explains the interrelationship between chronic absence and reading achievement levels, and offers an evidenced-based, community approach to increasing attendance rates, and ultimately achievement and graduation rates.

The analysis of Houston’s attendance is part of a growing national movement to look beyond daily attendance averages and use chronic absenteeism as an early warning sign for behavior, academic, and other interventions.



## Read Houston Read

A key goal outlined in the *Blueprint for Community Action* is to boost third grade reading levels for all students in Houston. The Foundation collaborated with Houston Independent School District on their Literacy by 3 strategic plan. One strategy to address the issue of low third-grade reading scores was to develop and design *Read Houston Read*, an innovative face-to-face and online program that was launched during the 2014–2015 school year. In this program, adult mentors spend **30–60 minutes per week** reading to and with at-risk students. Both volunteers and students have an opportunity to build a strong relationship that will leave a lasting impact on the student’s self-esteem, ability to learn, and the student’s ultimate reading success. By working with the same student(s) for an entire school year, volunteers have the potential to change the direction of their lives, simply by sharing the gift of reading.

In the first year of *Read Houston Read*, the Foundation—along with the Children’s Museum of Houston, Phillips 66, the Wayne Duddleston Foundation, and other strategic partners—**mobilized 600+ volunteers to mentor to 800+ first graders in 53 HISD elementary schools**. The program was so successful that the district and their partners expanded the program for the 2015–2016 school year by adding an additional **10 schools to the face-to-face mentor program (for a total of 50)** and **doubling the number of schools participating online**. **Five new financial literacy modules** were also developed through support from PricewaterhouseCoopers. Second grade students who were in the program during first grade were also eligible to continue meeting weekly with their adult mentors, thus ensuring that all students in the program were much closer to reading and writing with fluency by third grade. The expansion of *Read Houston Read* during the 2015–2016 school year has resulted in an increase of volunteers to more than **700 mentors serving more than 1,000 children across 79 schools**.

*“The Foundation has played an important role in HISD’s effort to ensure that every child reads at or above grade level by the end of the third grade by bringing together key partners, funding, resources, volunteer management infrastructure, and thought leadership toward the implementation of the Read Houston Read program.”*

—CINDY PURYEAR, HISD DIRECTOR OF LITERACY



# INVEST IN COMMUNITY IMPACT



## Resource Donations

**BOOKS:** Providing books to families living in lower-income households is a priority for the Foundation, especially in light of research that shows there is only one book available for every 300 children in low-income homes as opposed to 13 books, on average, in the homes of families with middle and higher incomes. Through generous donations, the Foundation distributed more than **35,000 books** to literacy partners and children and families in low-income households. The following strategic partners were instrumental in providing book resources to the Foundation:



**PRO-BONO SERVICES:** Houston businesses play an essential role in helping move the needle on low literacy by providing pro-bono services. The Foundation received more than **\$600,000 worth of services** through the expertise of the following companies:



**GOODS:** Generous corporate partners provided more than **\$400,000 worth of goods** which benefited the Foundation or one of the many literacy-based community organizations. Gifts of furniture, advertising space, printing, computers and other IT products, and other donated goods enhanced the work of our literacy partners and helped them provide important services designed to combat low literacy levels. The following companies have contributed to the literacy cause in this way:



**GRANTS:** In support of the strategic goals outlined in the *Blueprint for Community Action*, several companies and foundations stepped up and made substantive financial investments to back the Foundation's efforts. More than **\$1.2 million** in grants were awarded to the Foundation cumulatively during 2014 and 2015. The Foundation extends its thanks to the following companies for investing in our community's future:





# INCREASE AWARENESS



## Signature Events

Each year, the Foundation hosts events to raise awareness of its efforts and gain stakeholders' support.

### A CELEBRATION OF READING

The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation hosts **A Celebration of Reading**, an inspirational event featuring a memorable evening hosted by the Bush family where Pulitzer Prize-winning and national bestselling authors bring their work to life. In 2014, **A Celebration of Reading** raised approximately **\$2.5 million** and in 2015, the signature event paid tribute to Mrs. Bush's 90th birthday and raised a record-breaking **\$2.6 million**. The event benefited the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.



Neil Bush, Maria Bush, Jackie Collins, First Lady Barbara Bush, President George W. Bush, Doro Bush Koch, and David McCullough attending the 2015 A Celebration of Reading

### LIFE WITHOUT LITERACY LUNCHEON

In recognition of National Literacy Awareness Month in September 2015, the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation hosted the **Life Without Literacy** luncheon, a heartfelt event that placed a spotlight on Houston's literacy crisis and the impact low literacy has on individuals, families, and our community. The thought-provoking and stirring luncheon program featured depictions of having a life without literacy and included a notable lineup of dignitaries and national influencers, including Emmy Award-Winning ABC News Anchor Byron Pitts, First Lady of Texas Cecilia Abbott, and Houston Mayor Annise Parker. Nearly **300 influential business and community leaders** attended this literacy awareness event that called for them to unite to help break the cycle of low literacy.



Byron Pitts, First Lady Cecelia Abbott, Mayor Annise Parker, Dr. Julie Baker Finck, Neil Bush, and Reverend Ray Mackey

### JUNGLE BOOK GALA

In 2015, the Young Professionals Group launched the **Jungle Book Gala**, a charitable event that benefited the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation. The black-tie affair was held at the Houston Zoo and featured a spirited evening complete with dinner, dancing, live entertainment, and close-up views of the zoo's Jaguar habitat. The event celebrated the group's accomplishments and commitment of engaging young professionals to help solve Houston's ongoing literacy crisis.

## Strategic Communications

The Foundation successfully executed a strategic communications plan to engage stakeholders around key areas for impact.

  
**12.5M+**  
VIEWS FROM NEWS RELEASES, ADVISORIES AND NEWS CONFERENCES, VALUED AT \$4M+

  
**7,000+**  
SUBSCRIBERS FOR THE LITERACY CONNECTION MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

  
**3,000+**  
FOLLOWERS, WHICH CREATED 1.9M+ VIEWS

  
**400+**  
FOLLOWERS, WHICH CREATED 77K+ VIEWS

  
**8M**  
VIEWS FROM AD SPONSORED BY PHILLIPS 66 IN THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE, RESULTED IN \$50,000 TOWARDS ADDITIONAL ADS

  
**15**  
HIGH-PROFILE EVENTS AND PROMINENT FIGURES INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE LITERACY CRISIS

# INCREASE AWARENESS



## Annual Campaigns

### READ ALOUD MONTH

Research shows that reading aloud is the single most important activity that parents, grandparents, childcare providers, and teachers can do to help a child develop the foundational skills needed for learning how to read, thus decreasing low literacy rates. **National Read Aloud Month** in March encourages members of the community to read to a child for at least 15 minutes a day to position them for long-term success in school, work, and life. To increase the awareness and importance of reading aloud to children, the Foundation united with **15 local literacy organizations** to provide the community with useful literacy tools and resources and hosted an array of literacy-related activities and events. A major highlight was the Read Aloud sessions with children that took place at Walnut Bend Elementary School, H-E-B grocery stores, and the Clayton Homes affordable-housing community. Staff members also strolled the streets of downtown Houston dressed as Dr. Seuss characters, Thing One and Thing Two, engaging people passing by with inquiries about literacy and their favorite Dr. Seuss books.



*Young Professionals' Group member Jaime Quick reads to a group of children.*

### SEIZE THE SUMMER

Summer reading loss is a significant contributing factor to low literacy rates and refers to the decline in reading skills over the months when students do not have access to school or books. On the contrary, studies show that children who read at least four books during the summer tend to fare better than their peers regardless of a student's ethnicity, socioeconomic level, or previous achievements. The academic decline over the summer months is especially dramatic for economically deprived students who are not engaged in enrichment activities. Unfortunately, the summer reading loss accumulates over the years and eventually results in a widening of the achievement gap across race and socioeconomic status.

In Summer 2015, the Foundation partnered with the Houston Area Urban League and held Summer Reading Camps in three low-income communities. These reading camps were focused on guided reading skills and strategies for children and their caregivers in these communities. **More than 150 children** and many of their caregivers attended the camps, and all received **10+ books** each to start or supplement their home libraries.



*A toddler proudly holds his new book given to him by the Foundation during family literacy event.*

### LITERACY AWARENESS MONTH

Observed in September, **National Literacy Awareness Month** places a spotlight on the prevalent literacy crisis and the impact it has on individuals, families, and the overall community. In Houston alone, one in five adults are functionally illiterate and three in five children lack reading-readiness skills when entering kindergarten.

The Foundation recognizes that if people cannot read or write, they cannot possibly reach their full God-given potential. To help increase awareness of the literacy crisis and solutions, the Foundation created several literacy tools and resources, including reading activity calendars accessible through online and social media platforms, built and furnished a school library with The Mission Continues organization, and launched the **Life Without Literacy** awareness luncheon that placed the spotlight on low literacy rates in Houston.

# DONOR RECOGNITION

## \$300,000+

Phillips 66  
Deloitte LLP\*  
ConocoPhillips

## \$100,000 – 299,999

The Hon. & Ms. Hushang Ansary  
Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo  
Maersk Oil\*  
Stewart & Stevenson  
Scholastic Book Fair\*

## \$50,000 – 99,999

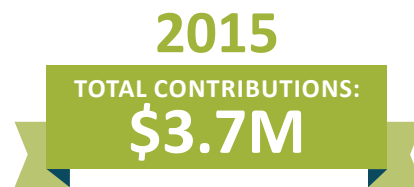
C. James & Carole Walter Looke Family Fund  
Cathy and Joe Cleary  
Katherine G. McGovern  
The Lester and Sue Smith Foundation  
Terry & Greg Ebel  
Palmetto Partners, Ltd./The Robert & Janice McNair Foundation  
McLane Group or Elizabeth & Drayton McLane  
Halliburton\*  
Quanex Foundation  
Shell Oil  
IBM\*  
Marathon Oil\*  
Deustser\*

## \$20,000 – 49,999

Ann & Clarence Cazalot  
Albert & Ethel Herzstein Charitable Foundation  
H-E-B  
CenterPoint Energy\*  
The Elkins Foundation  
Pricewaterhouse Coopers  
Farish Fund  
LyondellBasell Industries  
Light Charitable Trust  
Ray Fish Foundation  
ION Geophysical Corporation  
Fayez Sarofim  
Chuck & Gena Norris  
Spindletop Charities, Inc.

*\*Indicates at least part of the gift came in the form of an in-kind donation.*

# FINANCIALS



Additional financial details can be found in our Form 990.



Children at Kelso Elementary School hold up new books while sitting in their brand new library courtesy of The Mission Continues and the Foundation.



Anne Taylor of Deloitte and Neil Bush talk with children during Deloitte Impact Day which highlighted literacy.



*“If you help a person to read, then their opportunities in life will be endless.”*

— FIRST LADY BARBARA BUSH



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