



FACT SHEET

Promoting Literacy Right From the Start

When and how did Born to Read start?

In 2009 The Rotary Club of Traverse Bay Twilight approved early literacy as the focus for its signature project. Rotarians convened community partners with the goal of delivering a book to every baby born at Munson Medical Center. **Born to Read** was launched in 2011. Since then, our efforts have expanded.

Why is spreading the Born to Read message so important?

- **In Michigan, almost 70% of 4th graders are NOT reading at grade level.** In 2016, the state was ranked 36th in 4th grade reading proficiency.
- **Brain development** –birth to 3 is the greatest period of brain growth and language development.
- **School readiness and success** –by the time children enter school, there is a huge gap in learning readiness between those who are read to and those who are not. 40% of our community's children enter Kindergarten at the lowest level of school readiness.
- **Children's vocabulary skills are linked to their economic backgrounds.** By 3 years of age, there is a 30 million-word gap between children from the wealthiest and poorest families. This gap only gets worse as children struggle with reading and get further behind in school.
- Reading, interacting with, telling stories, singing to babies and preschoolers is the **single most important thing we can do** to help ensure children succeed in school.
- Yet - **Only 40%** of parents read to their preschool children everyday. Only **15%** read to babies!

How does Born to Read spread our message?

We start with **expectant parents** during their last trimester visit at Munson Medical Center, delivering a gift packet with a book for baby, information about why reading is important, a certificate they can take to Traverse Area District Library branches to receive a tote bag with another free book, plus available community resources and more.

After the baby is born, parents at Munson receive another book to read with their baby with a Born to Read card inserted that reminds them of the importance of reading to babies everyday and simple tips on how to read to infants and toddlers.

To get our message out into the community, we partner with Great Start's 5toOne neighborhood centers and play groups and in 2016 we started an **exciting new outreach strategy - Born to Read Ambassadors**. Ambassadors are **trained volunteers** who help spread our message in the community. Some read with kids at baby pantries, WIC clinics, early childhood centers and other locations, distributing books to young children and giving parents tips on early literacy. Others are Born to Read advocates, using their unique talents and resources to help achieve our mission.

How many people does Born to Read reach and how much does it cost?

- Last year, Born to Read reached nearly **4,000** parents in the 5-county region and distributed **3,000** books.
- **The annual cost for maintaining Born to Read activities is \$33,000.** Born to Read is an all-volunteer project. All funds raised are used for purchasing books and other program expenses.
- **Funding sources** include the United Way of Northwest Michigan, Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, Friends of the Traverse Area District Library, 100 Women Who Care, and fundraising by the Rotary Club of Traverse Bay Twilight Foundation. We are also grateful for in-kind support provided by several community businesses and organizations, including Cherry Capital Foods, Grand Traverse Pie Company, Traverse City Children's Book Festival, and T.J. Maxx.