



*Once you learn to read,  
you will be forever free.*

- Frederick Douglass



# Peace in the Pages

Presented by



THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
— FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA —

November 7, 2025



# Welcome to Peace in the Pages!

## From Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole

*Renowned Anthropologist, Author, College President, and National Humanities Medalist*



I join with each of you in celebrating READ USA's remarkable work over the past 10 years! It is my hope that each of us will do what we can to help READ USA continue to carry out its mission of bringing the power of literacy to children in our community and beyond.

For a decade, READ USA has opened the doors of opportunity through the power of literacy. When a child learns to read proficiently, a whole new world becomes available — a world where imagination expands, confidence grows, and children can soar to the heights of their possibilities. Literacy is more than an academic skill; it is the foundation upon which success in life is built. It is, quite simply, a path to freedom — freedom of thought, the freedom of independence, and the freedom to shape one's own future.

At the heart of READ USA's mission is a beautiful symmetry: empowering children to become proficient readers and empowering local teens through meaningful work as paid literacy tutors. These young tutors not only strengthen their students' reading skills — they also learn leadership, responsibility, career development, and the deep satisfaction that comes from cultivating life-improving skills in others. In every tutoring session, in every shared story, they help build a more connected and compassionate community.

For me, this work reflects something deeply human: the simple yet profound act of coming to the table together. Around the table, we share ideas, listen to one another, and learn from our differences. Around the table, we grow. READ USA has created countless such tables — in classrooms, homes, and communities — where children and teens come together through literacy to discover their voices and their power.

Today, as we reflect on READ USA's first 10 years, we also look ahead toward a future where every child can read with confidence, and every young person can see themselves as a force for good. It is through this coming together as families, educators, community leaders, and supporters like you that true freedom grows.

So let us continue to come to the table — to listen, to learn, and to build together. Through literacy, we create not only stronger readers, but a stronger, freer, and more united community. Thank you for being part of this extraordinary journey. Thank you for believing in the transformative power of literacy and for helping READ USA continue this essential work.

With a grateful heart,  
Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole

# Program

## 11:30 A.M. WELCOME

---

### Welcome

Dr. Robert H. Kelly, Jr., READ USA President and CEO

### Invocation

Rabbi Maya Glasser, The Temple Jacksonville  
Dr. Keith Russell, Westside Baptist Church

### Remarks

The Honorable Charlotte Joyce, Duval County Public Schools, Board Chair, District 6

### READ USA Awards Presentation

#### READ to Lead Award

Peter Racine, Retired President, Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation

#### Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy through Journalism

Will Brown, Reporter, WJCT News

#### Marjorie Broward Memorial Scholarship Award

Jennifer Beale-Collier, Principal, Anchor Academy Elementary School

## KEYNOTE & PARTNER PRESENTATIONS

---

### Remarks

The Honorable Kevin Carrico, Jacksonville City Council President, District 4

### Keynote Speaker

Dr. David Steiner, Executive Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy

### READ JAX Expansion

Meredith Chartrand Frisch, Kids Hope Alliance Board Member

Isaiah Oliver, President of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida

Dr. Christopher Bernier, Superintendent of Duval County Public Schools (DCPS)

### READ USA Impact Update

Dr. Robert H. Kelly, Jr., READ USA President and CEO

***READ USA's mission is to transform America's future by ensuring every child and teen reads on grade level and is prepared to succeed in the workforce and beyond.***



# Our Impact

## 2011-2025

### Literacy Tutoring

READ USA recruits, trains, and pays local teenagers to deliver one-to-one literacy tutoring to elementary students who are below grade-level reading proficiency. The model, which uses an evidence-based instruction, has *proven* effective in bringing elementary students up to grade-level reading proficiency.

**5,300+**

Students

**1,990+**

Teen tutors

**480+**

Teachers

### Workforce Development

Our Workforce Development outcomes are driven by our Literacy Tutoring program, providing our teen tutors - *the workforce of tomorrow* - with valuable, transferable workforce skills so they can succeed in any career pathway they choose.

**95%**

*Reported Improvement  
in Problem Solving and  
Work Ethic*

**93%**

*Reported Improvement  
in Communication and  
Integrity*

### Book Choice & Ownership

We provide thousands of Duval County public elementary school students with free books each spring at our annual READ USA Book Fairs, and participate in numerous community events during the year where we provide free books to young children.

**970,200+**

Books distributed

**364,200+**

Students served

### Proven Literacy Outcomes:

#### Lake Lucina Elementary

Students in READ USA Literacy Tutoring:

- Achieved **79% greater scale score growth** than comparison students (23.13 vs. 12.91).
- Showed a **59% higher gain** in achievement level from PM1 to PM3 (1.88 vs. 1.18).
- Attended school nearly 5% more than comparison students (10 days more per year).

#### Anchor Academy

Students in READ USA Literacy Tutoring:

- Demonstrated **54% greater scale score growth** than comparison students (19.85 vs. 12.91).
- Achieved an **81% higher gain** in achievement level (2.14 vs. 1.18).
- Attended school nearly 3% more than comparison students (6 days more per year).
- **70% were from military families.**

*"Student confidence levels increased because of their participation, and teachers saw a drastic increase in performance and class participation across the board. Many students are now involved in leadership activities, such as safety patrol—which is a direct result of the increased confidence they built because of READ USA Literacy Tutoring."*

*-Anchor Academy Principal  
Jennifer Beale-Collier*

### READ USA Programming

Literacy Tutoring | Workforce Development | Book Choice & Ownership  
Family Engagement | Educator Professional Development



# Thank you to our Sponsors & Donors!

## Literacy Legend

(\$50,000+)

AmeriCorps †	Ellen & Jim Wiss*
AmeriCorps VISTA †	Kids Hope Alliance †
CareerSource Northeast Florida †	Mandelblatt Foundation*
Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund*	Michael Ward & Jennifer Glock Foundation*
Duval County Public Schools †	Volunteer Florida †
	VyStar Credit Union*

## Literacy Game Changer

(\$30,000-\$49,999)

AT&T	Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation*
------	-------------------------------------

## Literacy Champion

(\$20,000-\$29,999)

Diane & Steve Halverson*	DuBow Family Foundation*
--------------------------	--------------------------

## Literacy Partner

(\$10,000-\$19,999)

Beaches Community Fund	Florida Blue	Partnership for Child Health †	Stephanie & Tim Cost*
Brian & Jake Wolfburg*	Jacksonville Transportation Authority	PGA Tour	TD Charitable Foundation
Boies Schiller Flexner	JB Foundation*	Dr. Robert H. Kelly, Jr.*	The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
Christina Little	J.B. Coxwell Contracting, Inc.	Sally & Mitchell Owens	The Schultz Center for Teaching & Leadership
Federal Bar Association – Broward County Chapter	Kimmie Winston	Sheila & Claude Collier*	
		Simply Healthcare	

## Literacy Advocate

(\$5,000-\$9,999)

Auld & White Constructors, LLC	Dr. Johnetta Betsch Cole	Paul & Debra Duran Family Charity	Whataburger
Caleb Johnson	JWB Real Estate	STEM2 Hub	Williams & Rowe Company, Inc.
Gallagher	Kawanza Suarez*	TECO   People's Gas	
Jan Healy & Chuck D. Hyman	Kevin Gay & Jesse Kraker	Terry Family Foundation	
JM Family Automotive – Southeast Toyota*	Martha & Tom Baker Family Fund*	Vanessa Tussey*	



## Literacy Angel

(\$1,000–\$4,999)

Ally Financial	Chester Spellman*	Kevin Hyde	Margaret Sherrill	Target Circle
Amber & Andrew Kemp-Gerstel	Dr. Davy Parrish	Kirsten & Josh Martino	Marla Buchanan*	Tina Wirth*
Anonymous	Deborah & Peter Gunnlaugsson	Kristanna B. Barnes	Meredith Guess	Unitarian Universalist Church
Ashley Goggins Blue	Frank Denton	LaKeisha Wells Palmer*	Moné Holder	Vicki Lee & James Henry Van Horn
Blue Ocean Title	Frederick Vanderbilt	Lakesha & Greg Burton*	Prattify	Vincent Taylor
Bob Pfohl	Glori Katz*	Laura & Travis Smith	Ruth Malman & Michael Opatowski*	W. C. Gentry
Brooks Rehabilitation*	Goodwill Industries of North Florida	Liebler Gonzalez & Portuondo	Dr. Sherry Magill*	Walmart
Charlene Landen*	Jennifer Swanson	Linda M. Watkins	Stuart Singer	Wawa Foundation
Cindy & Scott Cooper*			Susan D. Brandenburg*	

## Literacy Supporter

(Up to \$999)

Adam Chaskin	Cindi Goodeaux	Karen Cherney	Mary Ann Clark	Sujoy & Marjorie Chatterjee
Alaine & Dr. Joey Lerner	Clare Myers	Karla Wooten	Matt Minnick	Susan King*
Alice Kimbrough	Denise Sparf	Kathi Hart	Michele Megas	Susanne Herman
Alpha Theta Chapter ADK	Diane Hale	Kathleen Adkins	Natalie Dreyer	Sydney King
American Online Giving Foundation	Diane Lewis	Kathleen A. McArthur*	Pam Paul	Sylvia Armsby
Beth Cravey	Eric Nyman	Kathleen Pfohl	Richard Blackstone	Tabetha Cox
Betty Burney	Erin Thorne	Kathy McIlvaine	Ronald Pierre	Tiffany VillacortaBuer
Blue Ocean Cares	FSA Gives Back	Katy Keene*	Dr. Rudy F. Jamison, Jr.*	Vernon Forrest
Brenda Adeeb	Gayle Adams	Kenya Davis*	Shannon Shanklin	Victoria & Jason Miller
Carl Goldfarb	Georgia Pribanic*	Kyle Epting	Sigrid Mccawley	VyStar Credit Union Employees
Dr. Carlton Jones	Gretchen Lynch*	Marea Wexler	Silverfield Family Fund*	
Carmen North	Hannah Oberholtzer	Marina Caraballo	Sue Rust	
Carol Foster	Janet Allen			
Carol & Stephen Puldy	Janet Koehler			
Carolynn & John Longuil	Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida			
Chelsea Katz	John Sciortino			
Christopher Peak	Joseph Wolf*			
	Julie Bluett			



### Additional Founders for the Future\*

Baker Family Advised Fund  
Brent & Alison Trager Family Fund  
CSX  
David & Monique Miller Family Fund  
Diane & Steve Halverson  
Edelman Family Advised Fund  
Jodie & Eric Leach  
The Chartrand Family Fund

\* Founders for the Future are donors who pledged one-time gifts of \$25,000 or more and/or multi-year gifts in response to the 2020 Delores Barr Weaver \$225,000 matching challenge and the 2022 Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation \$1 million matching challenge.

† Contracts or grants for services rendered.



# Peace in the Pages Presented by

## Award Honorees



THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
— FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA —

### READ to Lead Award

The READ to Lead Award honors an individual who exhibits the bravery and willingness to lead – especially when such leadership is difficult.



#### Peter Racine

Retired President, Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation

Peter Racine has dedicated his life to service, guided by his mission to “connect, inspire, and support those creating a better world.” Recently retired as Senior Vice President of the Jaguars Foundation, he led more than \$50 million in grants supporting children and families, literacy, education, health, veterans, and animal welfare in Northeast Florida.

Peter began his life of service at Covenant House in New York City, later helping open shelters in Toronto and Houston, and founding Covenant House Honduras, where he served six years as Executive Director. In Jacksonville, he became the first Executive Director of the Northeast Florida Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, establishing in-home family prevention services in Duval and Clay counties.

He now serves as President of the Center for Central American Empowerment, which he co-founded with his wife, Kelly, to protect and empower women and girls in Central America, and as Minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville.

Featured in Time Magazine and Dateline NBC for his humanitarian work, Peter has also received two Regional Emmy® Awards and partnered with numerous national and local organizations to advance child and family well-being. He holds degrees from Rutgers University and the Catholic Theological Union.





# Peace in the Pages Presented by

## Award Honorees



THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
— FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA —

### Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy Through Journalism

For advancing an informed society and strengthening democracy through journalism.



#### Will Brown

Reporter, WJCT News

Will Brown is an award-winning journalist with *Jacksonville Today*, the digital arm of WJCT Public Media, where he reports on race, poverty, and structural inequality. His parents were avid readers and news consumers; their example spurred Will into serving as a journalist in Texas and Florida for nearly 20 years.

He began at WJCT as a Report for America corps member, covering pivotal stories such as the impact of congressional redistricting on Black voters, the Grand Park mass shooting, and the lasting effects of redlining in Jacksonville. Previously, he reported for the *Jacksonville Business Journal*, where he chronicled CSX's largest acquisition in decades, and for the *St. Augustine Record*, where he expanded coverage of women's sports and honored the class of 2020 despite pandemic disruptions.

Earlier in his career, Will worked as a sports reporter for the *Victoria Advocate* and a business reporter for the *Tallahassee Democrat* during the Great Recession. A highlight of his career was documenting his 2010 trip to South Africa for the men's World Cup for the *Democrat*, which was inspired by his reading of Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom.

A Florida native and proud third-generation Florida A&M Rattler, Will also holds a master's degree from the University of South Florida. He is a devoted husband to Whitney, father to Ben, and dog dad to Finchicus.



Photos show Will Brown's journalistic work and photography.



# Peace in the Pages Presented by

## Award Honorees



THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
— FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA —

### Marjorie Broward Memorial Scholarship Award

For exemplifying Marjorie's commitment to service, community, and the common good.



#### Jennifer Beale-Collier

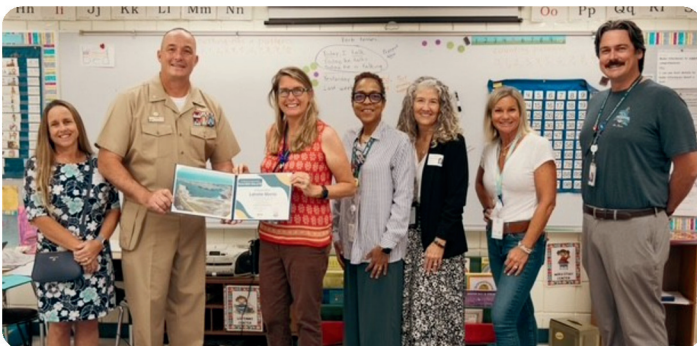
Principal, Anchor Academy Elementary School

Jennifer Beale-Collier is a dedicated and visionary leader with 23 years of service to Duval County Public Schools (DCPS). Guided by her belief that every child deserves the best educational experience possible, she leads with strategy, compassion, and purpose.

Under her leadership, Anchor Academy has implemented innovative initiatives—such as Calm Classroom, Anchored4Life, Wellness Wednesday, and the Silver & Golden Anchor Character Program—designed to support the “whole child” and foster a nurturing, high-achieving school culture. A passionate advocate for literacy, Mrs. Beale-Collier proudly partnered with READ USA to implement the Literacy Tutoring program for grades 3–5 at Anchor Academy, transforming the school's reading culture and producing measurable gains in literacy achievement. Students now see themselves as confident readers and lifelong learners, a testament to Mrs. Beale-Collier's belief in the power of access and opportunity.

Committed to excellence, she continues to guide her school toward regaining its “A” rating through collaboration, high expectations, and community partnership—embodying the school's theme of Dolphin PRIDE.

Beyond her professional achievements, Mrs. Beale-Collier treasures her family most. Married for 28 years, she is the proud mother of 23-year-old triplets whose experiences have shaped her student-centered leadership. Her legacy is one of heart, vision, and impact that transforms classrooms and empowers students to believe in their limitless potential.



# Thank you to our Presenting Sponsor



THE COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
— FOR NORTHEAST FLORIDA —

## Thank you to our Event Partners & Sponsors

**Ellen & Jim Wiss**



FLORIDA GRADE LEVEL READING CAMPAIGN

**SIGN UP  
TO GET  
INVOLVED**



READ JAX is a community effort to improve the literacy skills of students in Duval County. We know the importance of reading and how it can set our children on the path to success.





## READ JAX: A New Approach



**Ellen Wiss**

READ USA Board Chair

Ever since the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading was brought to Jacksonville in 2019, the READ JAX coalition has united the community around a shared commitment to literacy. Together, community partners have invested millions to strengthen literacy in pilot schools and embedded essential reading initiatives in programs across the city. We are grateful for our coalition partners who have had a tangible and life-changing impact on thousands of students during the past six years.

**Isaiah Oliver**

President of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida

The future of literacy in Jacksonville depends on all of us—educators, families, and the broader community. The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida is uniquely situated to convene partners around critical issues such as literacy and will lead the READ JAX coalition forward, uniting partners through a collective impact approach to drive lasting, citywide change. As part of this, we will refresh the Leadership Council and working groups to drive a broader vision forward together. Join us to shape what's next!



**Dr. Christopher Bernier**

Superintendent of Duval County Public Schools (DCPS)

Early literacy, from birth through third grade, is critical for long-term success, with research showing third grade as a pivotal milestone for graduation and life outcomes. We are proud of earning DCPS's A grade and are seeing increased reading proficiency across our schools. By focusing on literacy through high school and beyond, with the support of families, community partners, and The Community Foundation, we are working to ensure every child reads on grade level and is positioned for lifelong success.



# Our History

## How It All Started

READ USA began as a small project between a community volunteer and a teacher at George Washington Carver Elementary School in Duval County. While volunteering as a tutor in Ms. Vanessa Tussey's classroom – where 100% of the students come from a high-poverty neighborhood – Ellen Wiss saw something different and unique occurring in her classroom: struggling students were transforming into engaged, curious learners.

Motivated by what she was seeing, Wiss initiated a dialogue with Ms. Tussey about the increased engagement and outcomes she was witnessing, and asked what was needed most to help more students make the same transformation and replicate this in other classrooms.

Ms. Tussey's response was the spark that ignited READ USA into being: ***"Books of interest for my students to inspire them to read; books they can choose and own. Reading is key to learning."***

Together, Wiss and Tussey raised enough money to hold a free, colorful book fair, providing every student at GWCES with books of their choosing to keep. Demand and support for the Book Choice and Ownership program grew, and READ USA expanded into elementary schools across Duval County.

READ USA incorporated as a 501(c)(3) in 2015 and has since evolved into an established, multi-faceted organization led by literacy experts and support staff all focused on preparing Duval County students for lifelong success through career and literacy excellence.



## Our Board of Directors

Ellen A. Wiss Chair	Greg Burton (Emeritus)
Vanessa Tussey Vice Chair	Sheila Collier
Dr. Rudy F. Jamison, Jr. Secretary	Kyle Doyle
Meredith Guess Treasurer	Moné Holder
Tee Ambrose	Kevin Hyde
Ashley Goggins Blue	Glori Katz
Marla Buchanan	Kirsten Martino
	Carmen North
	Margaret Sherrill
	Kawanza Suarez
	Vincent Taylor

## Our Staff

Dr. Robert H. Kelly, Jr., President and CEO  
Jordyn Coleman, Transportation Supervisor  
Tabetha Cox, Chief Programs Officer  
Vernon Forrest, Finance Supervisor  
Kathi Hart, Lead Content Specialist  
Joshua Howell, Programs Assistant  
Becky Nathanson, Senior Director of AmeriCorps and HR  
Sophia Oliveira, Communications & Events Manager  
Maria Perez, Executive Assistant  
Melanie Poag, Content Specialist  
Holden Scyster, Chief Operating Officer  
Tracy Suter, Grants Manager, Bookkeeping & Data Supervisor  
Joe Wolf, Development Director

## Contact us

For more information about READ USA, contact Joe Wolf at [\(904\)-READ USA](tel:904-READ-USA) or [joe@readusainc.com](mailto:joe@readusainc.com).