



*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+ **1,990+** **480+**
Students Teen tutors 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% **93%**
Reported Improvement in Problem Solving and Work Ethic *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+ **364,200+**
Books distributed 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

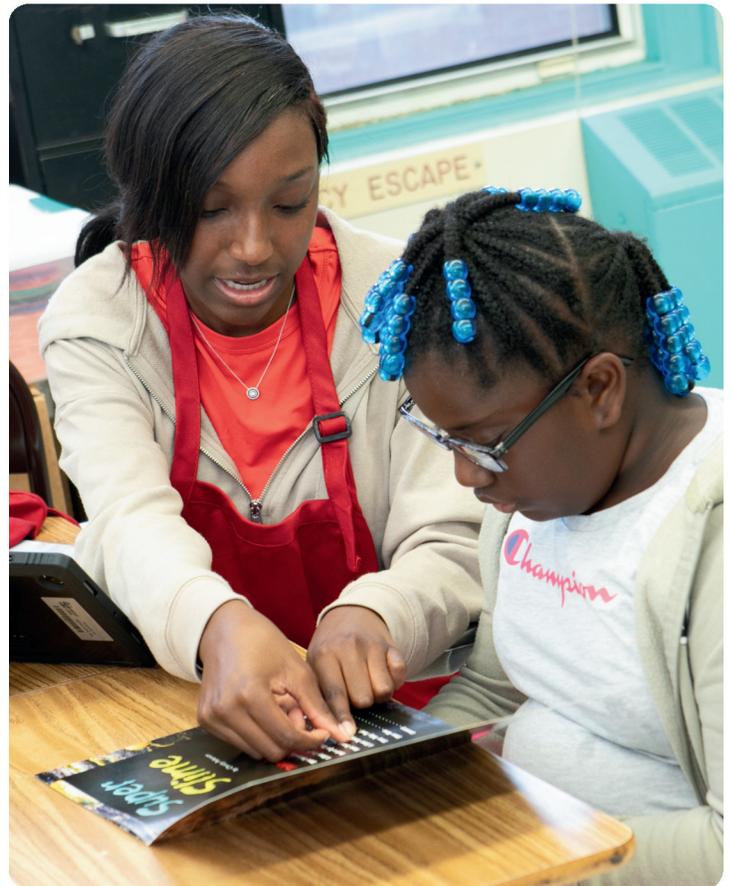
(\$10,000-\$19,999)

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Literacy Advocate

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

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
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(\$1,000-\$4,999)

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† Contracts or grants for services rendered.

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THE COMMUNITY
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Award Honorees

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.





Award Honorees

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.



Award Honorees

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.



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Ellen & Jim Wiss



**READ
JAX**

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.

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Contact us

For more information about READ USA, contact Joe Wolf at [\(904\)-READ USA](tel:904-732-7273) or joe@readusainc.com.