

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

- Frederick Douglass



Roseann Duran

Turning the Page on Literacy Our Approach to the Literacy Crisis

READ USA's mission is to solve illiteracy through high-interest books and high-quality teaching. Our research-based, multi-layered programming is helping children achieve - and sometimes surpass grade-level reading proficiency, while providing living-wage jobs and workforce skill development to teenagers and advancing the teaching profession.

High-Quality Teaching

A key ingredient of successful literacy growth is educator knowledge. Teachers and tutors must be equipped with specific, evidence-based skills to effectively support children in becoming literate. READ USA infuses teacher and teen professional development across all programs and cultivates workforce development skills in our teen tutors. Our unique approach prepares teachers and teen tutors to teach any child, at any time, to reach grade-level reading proficiency.

- Literacy Tutoring trains and employs teens to provide daily, intensive literacy tutoring to elementary students.
- Literacy Professional Development for Educators provides enhanced training, pay, and resources for teachers.
- Workforce Development cultivates professional, career, and transferable skills and trauma-informed training.

High-Interest Books

The other critical ingredient is book choice. Choice is tethered to interest; interest unleashes internal motivation; and internal motivation fuels reading volume. As the adage goes, the more you read, the better you get. Book choice is strongly linked to literacy progress, which is why READ USA infuses book choice into all programming. For example, in each READ USA Literacy Tutoring session, elementary students choose the book they will read from over 900 curated books. At READ USA book events, children choose free books to keep.

- Book Choice & Ownership provides free books to students across Duval County at our Book Fairs and events.
- Family Engagement empowers parents and families with tools to cultivate a love of reading in the home.
- Multicultural Literacy digitally and physically provides children with books depicting diverse people, places, and experiences that reflect themselves.

READ USA is a proud partner in the local, state, and national Grade-Level Reading Campaigns to help turn the page for a brighter future.







Program

11:30 A.M. WELCOME

Welcome Remarks READ USA Tutor Chyna Toban

Emcee Introductions

Whitney Meyer, Senior Vice President and Chief Community Impact Officer, Jacksonville Jaguars, and Peace in the Pages Honorary Co-Chair

Kemal Gasper, Vice President of Community Engagement, VyStar Credit Union

Invocation OneJax

Welcome Video Mayor Donna Deegan

Tribute to Roseann Duran

READ USA Tutor Chyna Toban and Student Giovanni

READ USA Program Testimonials

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole, Renowned Anthropologist, Author, College President, and National Humanities Medalist

AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy through Journalism

Tenikka Hughes, Anchor, Action News Jax

Marjorie Broward Memorial Scholarship Award Kathleen Adkins, Principal, Rutledge H. Pearson Elementary

READ to Lead Award

Patricia McElroy, President of the VyStar Foundation and Senior Vice President of VyStar Credit Union

READ to Heal Award

Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, George W. and Kathleen I. Gibbs Director and CEO, Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens

READ to Succeed Award

Caleb Johnson, Linebacker, Jacksonville Jaguars

READ to Remember Award

Dr. Sherry Magill, Retired President, Jessie Ball duPont Fund

READ to Be Free Award

Ronnie Gadio, READ USA Tutor

Closing Remarks

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



Peace in the Pages in

Honor of Roseann Duran



The generous support of Roseann Duran and her tremendous legacy gift to READ USA has underwritten the Peace in the Pages luncheon, making it possible

for all other donations and sponsorships to go directly to READ USA's programming and community impact.

Roseann Duran: A Life of Kindness & Generosity

Roseann Duran, who passed away earlier this year, leaves behind an indelible legacy on Northeast Florida through her philanthropy, volunteerism, and professional accomplishments that have inspired and supported thousands of people across all walks of life. Her highly successful career traversed the finance and marketing industries, throughout all of which Roseann remained grounded in supporting the people within her organizations and across Northeast Florida's many communities.

Roseann was the feature of our August 2024 volume of our Jeremy's Journey Through Jacksonville book series, a copy of which is provided to everyone attending this year's Peace in the Pages in Honor of Roseann Duran. In further recognition of Roseann's transformational legacy gift, each 2024 volume is dedicated in her memory and honor. READ USA has also named the Duran Data Portal — a critical resource in measuring and demonstrating the impact and results of our Literacy Tutoring program — in her honor.

A natural leader, she was tenacious about community involvement, both professionally and personally, and gave extensively of her time, talent, and treasure to numerous organizations in Jacksonville, which she called home since 1973.

"Roseann's extraordinary generosity will have a far-reaching impact on literacy and community empowerment, significantly bolstering our efforts to provide high-interest books and high-quality teaching resources to children, teens, and teachers," said Dr. Rob Kelly, READ USA President and CEO. "Roseann was a passionate supporter of literacy and READ USA for many years, and we remain emboldened by her steadfast belief in our mission. We are eternally grateful for her investment in the students we serve who ultimately benefit from her extraordinary gift."

Roseann was also an adventurer, a beloved "Aunt Rosie" to children and grandchildren of family and friends, an animal lover, a fierce tennis competitor, a high school majorette, an executive and business leader... and most impactfully, a genuine human who was dedicated to making the world a better place for all.

"Roseann radiated kindness, empathy, peace, freedom, leadership, and success - the very values that underscore the meaning and purpose behind our Peace in the Pages event and all that we do at READ USA," said Ellen Wiss, READ USA co-founder and Board Chair. "To know Roseann and feel her zest for life was an immense blessing, and she will be remembered as someone who has had a transformational impact on countless lives in Northeast Florida for years to come."

Honorary Co-Chairs

and Host Committee



Honorary Co-Chair Whitney Meyer

Senior Vice President and Chief Community Impact Officer, Jacksonville Jaguars

Whitney Meyer served as our emcee for our 2022 Peace in the Pages event and is a strong advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion – values that READ USA also embraces in all of our programming – not only at the Jaguars, but throughout our entire community.

We are very grateful for her ongoing support of READ USA and our 2024 program!
Read more about Whitney here.





Honorary Co-Chair Brian Wolfburg

President and Chief Executive Officer, VyStar Credit Union

Brian Wolfburg has been a long-time supporter and advocate for READ USA and literacy in our community and has led VyStar Credit Union to become a philanthropic powerhouse in the many communities it serves, particularly in our own back yard.

Margaret Rohal

Many thanks to Brian and his family for lending their voice and time to READ USA!
Read more about Brian here.



Host Committee Members

We are thankful to the following individuals who graciously served on our Host Committee:

Gayle Adams
Janet Allen
Judy Beaubouef
Marla Buchanan, READ USA
Board member
The Honorable April Carney
Sharon Coon
Stephanie Cost
Paul Duran
Laura Edgecombe
Mari Ganues
Kemal Gasper
Ashley Goggins, READ USA
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The Honorable Cindy Pearson

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Laura Smith
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Vincent Taylor, READ USA
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Founders for the Future (noted by *) 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.

Peace in the Pages in Honor of Roseann Duran **Award Honorees**

Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy Through Journalism For moving the needle on equity and democracy through journalistic work.



Tenikka Hughes Anchor, Action News Jax

For nearly a decade, Tenikka has co-anchored Action News Jax's evening newscasts, reporting on current events and providing information that impacts the lives of viewers and their families. A three-time Emmy Award-winning journalist,

Tenikka has been a broadcast journalist for 20 years across several markets before coming to Jacksonville in 2014, including Charlotte, North Carolina; Memphis, Tennessee; and Macon, Georgia.

When Tenikka was six years old and growing up in Whitakers, North Carolina, she was already showing signs of wanting to become a TV news anchor. "I loved watching the news ladies on TV as a little girl, particularly the Black news ladies," she told Jeremy for her Jeremy's Journey book. "I'm grateful that I got to see women who looked like me, and more than anything, I'm grateful that I've been allowed to continue to push the needle forward with representation."

Having grown up with a large extended family that instilled in her a passion for service and community, Tenikka is focused on positively impacting the lives of children and promoting youth literacy. In 2018, she launched Tenikka's Books for Kids, an annual book drive supported by Action News Jax that provides free books to local children to encourage summer reading through the Jacksonville Public Library. To date, she has collected nearly 30,000 books and last year alone she collected 8,000+ books.

"I am who I am through literacy," Tenikka also told Jeremy. "I grew up in a single-parent home in a little bitty town with not much money. My siblings and I grew up with three intentional women who provided love, encouragement, and taught us the value of education. Literacy brought me to where I am today."

As to her recognition as the 2024 Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy Through Journalism Honoree, "I love to see the team effort at READ USA around supporting literacy for our children. I'm a big supporter of READ USA's mission and feel honored to be part of it."

Watch and read more about Tennika and purchase her Jeremy's Journey book here.



Peace in the Pages in Honor of Roseann Duran **Award Honorees**

Marjorie Broward Memorial Scholarship Award

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



Kathleen Adkins Principal, Rutledge H. Pearson Elementary

Principal Adkins has led the team at the new Rutledge H. Pearson Elementary School since it opened its doors for the first time last school year. A Jacksonville native, Principal Adkins knew she wanted to become an educator when she was 12

years old at Mandarin Middle School. Miss Carson, her U.S. History teacher, made the subject so fun and interesting that, "I was captured," Principal Adkins shared with Jeremy for her Jeremy's Journey book. "That got me into education, and I never looked back!"

Growing up, her parents encouraged servant leadership and good citizenship, which has stuck with her all her life. "You can't lead others without wanting to serve them. It is important to put yourself in the other person's shoes and find out where they want to go and how fast they want to get there. Then, help them achieve their goals," she told Jeremy. She has since dedicated her life and career to educating our community's youth.

Her professional journey began in 2002 where she taught 3rd- and 4th-grade students at Pickett Elementary School before serving as a reading coach. She then served as assistant principal at Carter G. Woodson Elementary before becoming principal of Sally B. Mathis Elementary and Reynolds Lane Elementary before heeding the call to lead the much-larger, brand-new Rutledge H. Pearson Elementary, which combined two former schools. Naturally, as a former reading coach, Principal Adkins has placed a strong emphasis on reading in her school to help her kids, "Be Good, Be Great!" which is her personal slogan.

"READ USA has been a part of Rutledge H. Pearson Elementary School for two years now," she shared. "Over that time, my students have grown confidence in reading and have experienced true success."

"When READ USA tutors arrive, my students are excited to see them every day. READ USA will always be a part of the Rutledge H. Pearson Elementary family."

Watch and read more about Principal Adkins and purchase her Jeremy's Journey book here.



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.



Patricia McElroy

President of the VyStar Foundation and Senior Vice President of VyStar Credit Union

Patricia, or Patti as she prefers to be called, was destined for leadership ever since she was the youngest of four born in Springfield, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. Her parents instilled a sense of community and responsibility to care

for others in Patti and her three older brothers. "They were always focused on something greater than themselves," Patti shared with Jeremy for her Jeremy's Journey book.

That is a thread that has woven through Patti's entire life and career, which led her in several different directions. After her incredibly involved primary and secondary education, Patti attended Temple University's School of Law and became a commercial litigator for 15 years. But something greater was calling her. While practicing law, Patti learned two of the most valuable lessons of her life: to trust a system of justice that works and to understand how principles of law protect the least of us. But she wanted to discover what was beyond the principles of law created by humans. So, Patti graduated from Yale Divinity School and became an ordained Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 2007. Her career then took her to UNC Health, which is where she met her lifetime partner, Elyse. They moved to Jacksonville in 2016.

Patti's tenacity for helping people and serving others through leadership has only increased throughout her career journey - and she credits reading as the key to unlocking it all. She told Jeremy, "The road to empathy and possibility comes when you lay your eyes on the words that describe experiences of others. Whether fiction or nonfiction, it is an intimate experience. I found that the experience of empathy comes within your own imagination and heart. The world is opened within a child's mind when they are reading."

"That's what READ USA is doing: helping students to experience a world outside themselves and process meaning inside of their heads and hearts. There is nothing more important."

Watch and read more about Patti and purchase her Jeremy's Journey book here.



Award Honorees

READ to Heal Award

The READ to Heal Award recognizes someone who embodies the importance of healing in all forms – intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Healing brings our community together and unites us in support and respect for one another, and the READ to Heal Award honoree personifies the intersection of healing and literacy.





Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee

George W. and Kathleen I. Gibbs Director and CEO, Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens

Dr. Brownlee grew up in a reading family and developed a love for reading early in life. An avid reader to this day, Dr. Brownlee is also an accomplished author, and she has received several academic, professional, and scholarly awards. She has

curated and co-curated many exhibitions and is widely recognized for her leadership and influential publications.

Dr. Brownlee relocated to Jacksonville in 2020 and has since served as the George W. and Kathleen I. Gibbs Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens. She previously served as the director of the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art for nearly 20 years and is currently one of only seven African American general art museum directors in the country.

As Dr. Brownlee shared with Jeremy for her *Jeremy's Journey* book, she is humbled and honored to receive the READ to Heal Award from READ USA. "It is truly a privilege to lead the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens. The Museum is increasingly leaning into its role as a community hub for well-being, wellness, and healing. I represent an extraordinary team that is committed to ensuring that the Cummer is a resource that brings communities together in Jacksonville and beyond. Our team is also focused on growing the Cummer into a nationally recognized institution."

Under Dr. Brownlee's leadership, the Cummer Museum has embraced collaborative partnerships to promote hope and healing, including a partnership with Jacksonville Arts & Music School (JAMS), READ USA, and others. "The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens loved partnering with READ USA to create a series of Read Alouds about the meaningful connection between visual and written narratives to students."

She has also been inspired by READ USA's efforts to close the literacy gap in our community, stating, "We've got to make sure that by third grade, our children are reading on grade level. I'm so excited that READ USA is working toward that goal."

Watch and read more about Dr. Brownlee and purchase her *Jeremy's Journey* book here.



Peace in the Pages in Honor of Roseann Duran **Award Honorees**

READ to Succeed Award

The READ to Succeed Award honors an individual who embodies how reading fuels success in life.



Caleb Johnson Linebacker, Jacksonville Jaguars

Just as he pursues victory on the football field like a "Ball Hawk," Caleb is known among his family, friends, and colleagues as also being a "Book Hawk" because of his love of reading – even in the locker room. His passion for reading started early

in life, and he would read frequently to his youngest of two brothers. He credits both of his parents as excellent role models who were fully present in his life.

Caleb's competitive spirit also developed early in him. He remembers well his first day playing tackle football when he learned a valuable lesson: he made a great play and then got completely run over the next play, but he dusted himself and got back in the game. "You can love the game, but the game doesn't have to love you back. I'm competitive and I love to win, so I just keep going," he told Jeremy for his Jeremy's Journey book.

Caleb went on to play football in high school, college, and professionally, winning several awards along his journey. His love of reading has only grown deeper during his football career. He's currently writing and illustrating his own children's book, titled The Candlemaker. He has also been a strong supporter of nonprofit organizations focused on early childhood literacy, including READ USA and also serving as vice president of The Good Peoples Foundation, which is focused on literacy and community enrichment.

"I love READ USA," Caleb told Jeremy emphatically. "The mission is wonderful, and our kids have someone looking out for them." In reflecting on his passion for youth, reading, and READ USA's efforts to promote literacy, Caleb told Jeremy, "Effort is the number one thing no one can teach you to do...

In football and in life, you must always do your best and never let yourself or your teammates down. Remember that your effort is about something bigger than you!"

Watch and read more about Caleb and purchase his Jeremy's Journey book here.



Award Honorees

READ to Remember Award

The READ to Remember Award honors someone who makes historical connections relevant to today and embraces literacy as the connection between our past, present, and future.



Dr. Sherry Magill
Retired President, Jessie Ball duPont Fund

Among many notable accomplishments, Dr. Magill is known for having transformed downtown's long-vacant Haydon Burns Library into the spectacular Jessie Ball duPont Center. An architectural treasure, The Jessie "...brings together the

community and its nonprofits in a setting that appreciates our rich history while responding to the demands of today." And, as someone who learned to read at five years old from her brother, earned her doctorate degree, and has rallied the Jacksonville community around many important causes, Dr. Magill knows intrinsically the value of literacy and reading.

"Reading sustains me," Dr. Magill shared with Jeremy for her *Jeremy's Journey* book. "I spend much of my time reading and researching. I'm so glad that READ USA is helping Duval County elementary students learn how to read better. Everything I've done in my life of leadership has required reading."

A born leader, Dr. Magill grew up in Prattville, Alabama. She was an enthusiastic Girl Scout, and family time was precious to her, including her summers spent with her Nana. "The most important lesson Nana taught me was that love is the center; that friendship, love, and laughter are precious in our beloved community of Earth."

Dr. Magill was no stranger to witnessing struggle, too. The year she was senior class president of her high school was also the year that the high schools were fully integrated for the first time in Autauga County, Alabama. At graduation, there was a racially motivated stabbing that occurred between two adults who didn't even attend the school. "Unfortunately, people still have trouble believing that we are all equal human beings who deserve respect...we've got to reach a point where love and kindness prevail," she told Jeremy.

After 25 years as president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and earning many awards and accolades, Dr. Magill retired, but she remains active in the community by serving as Chair of LISC Jacksonville's Local Advisory Council and on the Charles F. Kettering Foundation board.

Watch and read more about Dr. Magill and purchase her *Jeremy's Journey* book here.



Award Honorees

READ to Be Free Award

The READ to Be Free Award honors an individual who uplifts the connection between the individual empowerment that comes from literacy and freedom. As George Washington Carver once said, "Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom," and our award recipient is also someone who fully embodies this ideal.



Ronnie Gadio **READ USA Tutor**

Ronnie was born in Jacksonville in 2005 after his parents immigrated to the U.S. in 2000 from Senegal in West Africa, bringing Ronnie's two older brothers and three older sisters with them. "They are hardworking, loving parents, but they could

never read books with me. They speak mainly Pulaar, their native language, and only read Arabic," Ronnie told Jeremy for his Jeremy's Journey book.

Ronnie attended John Love Early Learning Center and R. L. Brown Gifted and Talented Academy, and just recently graduated from William M. Raines High School. From 10th through 12th grade, Ronnie was a READ USA tutor at North Shore Elementary School. He would spend 40 minutes on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays with three students each day, and he was very proud of their reading progress. He celebrated this growth with his students, telling Jeremy, "I tried to be a good example and a leader with READ USA – like being a big brother for the younger students to follow. Learning to read is a pathway to success for them and for me."

However, Ronnie took what he learned as a tutor one giant step further: he also tutors his father in English. After he went through READ USA tutor training, he brought home some training materials to show his dad. "That was when I discovered that my father knew every sound in the alphabet. He knew his letters, so I knew he had the potential to learn." Since that time, his father has quickly caught on and has improved his English – all thanks to Ronnie's dedication.

Today, having learned a lot about literacy and leadership as a READ USA tutor, Ronnie feels that an important part of leadership is being honest with others and himself, which leads to doing the right thing.

"READ USA is great. It helps you with real life and teaches you how to deal with children and earn their respect. It has helped me become a better reader and a better person - 100%."

Watch and read more about Ronnie and purchase his Jeremy's Journey book here.



Jeremy's Journey Through Jacksonville

Every month, READ USA publishes a new volume of Jeremy's Journey, a book that follows our fictional character, Jeremy, who meets with some of Northeast Florida's exceptional community leaders and champions of literacy to learn their stories.

The purpose is to showcase diverse leaders, careers, and geography to demonstrate attainability and perpetuate representation by connecting leaders and students through literacy.

To date, READ USA has published 32 volumes featuring prominent leaders in our community.



2022 Series

Alton Yates Dr. Diana Greene Audrey Moran Darnell Smith Megha Parekh Michael Ward Dr. Rudy F. Jamison, Jr. Steve Halverson Principal Jasmin Esparza Gomez Dr. Sherry Magill Judge Angela M. Cox Martha Baker

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Principal Katie Adkins Dr. Floyd B. Willis Tenikka Smith Hughes Caleb Johnson Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee Patricia McElrov Ronnie Gadio Roseann Duran Mark Woods - COMING SOON! Betty Seabrook Burney - COMING SOON! Kevin Gay - COMING SOON! Nicole B. Thomas - COMING SOON!



Jeremy's Journey books are available to purchase!

For a \$20 donation, you can receive a copy of any Jeremy's Journey volume. For more details and to place an order, visit www.readusainc.com/jeremy.



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 every Duval County Public School (DCPS) elementary school as well as several charter and Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) Schools.

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 closing the literacy gap in Duval County.

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Contact us

For more information about READ USA, contact Sydney King at (904)-READ USA or sydney@readusainc.com.