

Racquets for Reading!!! – a Childhood Literacy Initiative

Racquets for Reading!!! (RFR) was created in response to the COVID pandemic to promote literacy and healthy eating and provide some FUN for disadvantaged and at-risk preschoolers and kindergartners in our service area -- those who would be affected the most by the COVID disruption in their lives. Since RFR launched in November 2020, we have built “home libraries” and provided FUN giveaways for more than 6,100 kids in 24 different school systems in central and southside Virginia. We target preschoolers in free public school Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) programs and kindergartners in public schools with lower third grade reading scores and higher free or reduced lunch eligibility percentages. 25% of kids who don’t read at grade level by the end of third grade will drop out of school. Kids who don’t read at grade level by the end of kindergarten will likely not make the third-grade benchmark. Our goal is to help overcome the effects of COVID and have ALL kids read at grade level by the end of kindergarten. Having age-appropriate books in the home to read and re-read is the key to developing vocabulary and reading skills.



WHY Racquets for Reading!!!? We have been working with VPI preschool classrooms for more than seven years teaching kids motor, tennis and life skills. Three years ago, we added literacy as part of a preschool pilot program in Albemarle County where we are based. We then expanded the literacy component to all preschoolers in Albemarle County schools and added a kindergarten pilot. When it became apparent that COVID wasn’t going to subside any time soon, we stepped up and created **Racquets for Reading!!!** We had existing relationships with 30 school systems, we knew how to raise funds and we had a track record for getting things done. Tennis is a lifetime sport. Reading is a lifetime skill. They’re a great combination!

HOW does Racquets for Reading!!! work? We send checks payable to Scholastic Book Club to schools. Classroom teachers select and purchase “bargain” Scholastic books that suit their classroom demographics. Teachers determine the structure and timing of the giveaways. We also provide FUN giveaways – **Go Bananas for QuickStart!** nutrition cards, mini reading rubber duckies or I LOVE READING pins and banana-scented bookmarks and stickers. All we ask in return is a list of books purchased, photos of the kids with the books and giveaways and that a thank-you note be sent to the donor who made the giveaway possible. Each kid receives six to ten books depending on the “bargains” teachers find. Parents and siblings are encouraged to read with the kids at home. It’s a simple, impactful approach.

HOW much does Racquets for Reading!!! cost? It costs \$14.25 per kid to provide six to ten books and FUN giveaways. \$12.00 is allocated to books. For every \$1,000 we raise, we can reach 70 kids.

WHAT school systems have benefited so far? Albemarle, Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Campbell, Culpeper, Cumberland, Danville, Fluvanna, Franklin, Greene, Greensville, Louisa, Lunenburg, Madison, Martinsville, Mecklenburg, Nelson, Nottoway, Orange, Patrick, Prince Edward and Rappahannock.

WHO has funded Racquets for Reading!!!? Our growing list of supporters includes: American Woodmark Foundation, Anonymous Donor #1, Anonymous Donor #2, Bama Works Fund, Book Baskets, CAPTRUST Community Foundation, Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia, William A. Cooke Foundation, Dollar General Literacy Foundation, EnergixGroup, The Essential Foundation (Aqua Virginia), Go Bananas Charitable Fund, Little Joe Chickapig, Luck Stone, Nora Roberts Foundation, Northern Piedmont Community Foundation, PATH Foundation, Pardee Resources Company, Walter J. Payne Foundation, Plow & Hearth, POMI, Dick Purcell Land Cattle & Timber, Richard Lykes Rappahannock Community Fund, The Scherer Foundation, SHEETZ, Smith Mountain Lake Rotary Foundation, Smyth Foundation Fund, The Soho Center, Southside Electric Cooperative, The Wawa Foundation, Weyerhaeuser and lots of generous individual donors. Many have contributed more than once!

WHO is QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia? We are an all-volunteer, grassroots Community Tennis Association and 501(c)(3) public charity that has taken tennis to 251 schools with 117,000 kids since 2009. We have also promoted healthy eating since we started and added childhood literacy to our mission a few years ago. Our goal is to create happy, healthy, active and literate kids in the communities we serve. We do what we can to enrich kids' lives, especially the underserved in under-resourced communities, through tennis. Our exemplary efforts were recently recognized as we were named the Community Tennis Association of the Year and a Champion of Tennis for 2021 by Racquets Sport Industry Magazine.



WHO needs your support? There are 4,000 preschoolers and 8,000 kindergartners in our 31-county and city service area. We prioritize preschoolers because they must be disadvantaged and/or at-risk of academic failure to qualify for the free VPI preschool program. We next focus on kindergartners who are in school systems with low third-grade reading scores and schools with larger low-income populations. Currently 25 school systems we work with have reading scores below 70%, one as low as 30%. The other six school systems have scores ranging from 70 to 78%. Not one school system has reading scores where we would like them to be!

HOW can you help? You can help these kids by funding books and giveaways or contributing new, age-appropriate books. You can volunteer to go to schools and read to kids. You can read to kids at playgrounds, parks, libraries or in laundromats while their parents tend to the wash. We have lots of FUN ideas to share. Call 434-244-9644 or email: quickstartcentral@comcast.net to find out how you can help.

Want to be a great adult? Play tennis! Read books! Eat healthy! Have FUN!

Racquets for Reading!!! – Year Three

2022/2023 School Year

Budget

Scope: We would like to reach all preschoolers and at least half of the kindergartners in our third year.



Funding needed

• 4,000 preschoolers	\$ 57,000
• 4,000 kindergartners	<u>57,000</u>
Total	<u>\$114,000</u>

Expenses

• Books	\$ 96,000
• Go Bananas! cards	5,040
• Rubber duckies	5,330
• I LOVE READING pins	1,130
• Bookmarks	2,060
• Stickers	350
• Postage & shipping	<u>4,090</u>
Total	<u>\$114,000</u>

