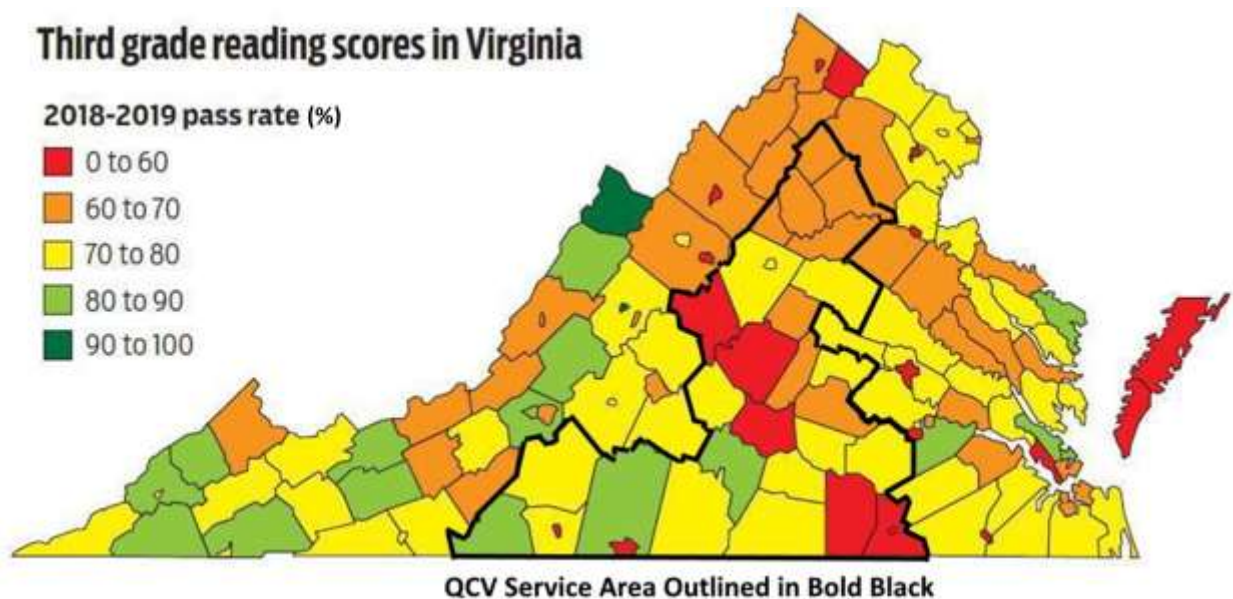




\*\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \*\*\*

## Racquets for Reading!!! Update

**Charlottesville, Virginia (5/17/2021)** – QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia, Inc. (QCV) is pleased to report that more than 2,400 preschoolers and kindergartners in 13 different school systems have been beneficiaries of [Racquets for Reading!!!](#) -- our reading and healthy-eating initiative created in response to the COVID pandemic. Our original, pre-COVID, goal for childhood literacy for the 2020/2021 school year was 225 preschoolers and 90 kindergartners in Albemarle County as we planned to expand on the reading pilot we offered for 54 preschoolers in our [BrightSTARS – Tennis for Me!](#) enrichment program during the previous school year. We also had plans for a new enrichment program for kindergartners, [Racquets, Reading & Eating](#), which was to be piloted at Greer Elementary. COVID derailed our plans and presented us with not only a huge challenge but an even bigger opportunity to reach more kids.



Lynda Harrill, QCV QuickStart Coordinator, has several observations on how QCV responded to the COVID challenge/opportunity. “First, because the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation turned down our COVID-response grant application for an additional 760 kindergartners in Albemarle County in mid-October, plus the fact that the list of approved CACF grant recipients included no one who focuses primarily on young kids much less early childhood literacy, we shifted our literacy fundraising efforts to counties outside Albemarle. We looked for other counties in our service area that could use some support with childhood literacy and healthy eating. A map of third-grade reading scores in Virginia (pictured above) showed us the way. Our strategy would be to get books to preschoolers (age 4) in public schools, since in Virginia these children have to be disadvantaged or at-risk to qualify to attend the free public-schools preschool program. At the same time, we would focus on kindergartners (age 5) in the under-70 percent pass rate counties, the ‘red’ and ‘orange’ counties on the map. We also would reach out to

individual schools with lower reading scores and higher poverty rates in the 'yellow' and 'light green' counties (70-90 percent pass rate). We launched our Racquets for Reading!!! initiative on November 1 without any fanfare. We simply set out to find local donors who wanted to support early childhood literacy and healthy eating in their respective communities.

"It's been a wild yet unbelievably rewarding six months. We budgeted for about 1,000 kids for the year and we've already reached 400 inside and 2,000+ outside Albemarle. In addition to raising the funds to provide books and related giveaways for 2,400+ kids, we have partnered with the Heights Family Foundation to launch a Culpeper/Madison chapter of [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#) (DPIL), and we are partnering with local libraries and funders to help start DPIL chapters in Appomattox, Buckingham, Cumberland, Nelson and Prince Edward counties. DPIL provides free books each month mailed directly to homes for kids from birth until they turn five. It's a wonderful, life-changing program.

"Research shows that kids who have home libraries of age-appropriate books will develop vocabulary and acquire reading skills to enable them to succeed academically and in life. Research also indicates that in low-income communities there is only ONE book for every 300 kids. Third-grade reading scores are significant because a kid who doesn't read at grade level has a 25 percent chance of dropping out of school. A kid who doesn't read at grade level at the end of kindergarten will likely not read at grade level by the end of third grade. This plays out in schools all over Virginia. This cycle needs to stop. By simply getting books in kids' hands, we can change this and get all kids ready to learn in school.

"The answer was so obvious – we need to create a 'reading pathway' from birth through kindergarten to get kids to love books and read at grade level by the end of kindergarten. That's the plan.

"Racquets for Reading!!! is very much like the original Jump Start QuickStart initiative we began in 2009. We wanted a tennis racquet in every hand and a smile on every face. Our original goal was 110 schools. We've taken tennis to 249 schools with 115,000 kids. Now we want books in every hand and even more smiles.

"Second, I want to make sure all our grantors and donors know how much we, all the kids we've reached, teachers, administrators and parents appreciate their support. The outpouring of gratitude we have received from the beneficiaries of Racquets for Reading!!! is amazing and heart-warming. During the crazy COVID times, all the handwritten thank-you notes, emails and wonderful photos have provided many bright spots.

"Finally, thanks go to all our QCV Board members for being so responsive, supportive and active during the COVID crisis. It's been a difficult time for everyone and they have stepped up repeatedly so we can continue to positively impact kids' lives. Tennis is a lifetime sport! Reading is a lifetime skill! It's a win-win-win for kids, donors and us."

Please visit the [QCV website](#) to learn more about what we are doing to promote physical activity, healthy eating and early childhood literacy for preschoolers and kindergartners through our [Racquets for Reading!!!](#) initiative during COVID.

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

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QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia is an all-volunteer, grassroots Community Tennis Association established in 2009 as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization to promote, develop and grow QuickStart Tennis in the heart of Virginia for all beginners, especially underserved youth, using the kid-sized QuickStart Tennis format. QCV's service area includes Albemarle, Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Culpeper, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Fluvanna, Franklin, Greene, Greensville, Halifax, Henry, Louisa, Lunenburg, Madison, Mecklenburg, Nelson, Nottoway, Orange, Patrick Pittsylvania, Prince Edward, Powhatan and Rappahannock counties and the cities of Charlottesville, Danville and Martinsville, plus under a special arrangement, King George County. We currently serve 212 schools with 99,000 kids, 15 parks & recreation departments, three Boys & Girls Clubs and two YMCAs in 27 counties and three independent cities. We have also gotten tennis into PE classes in 37 additional schools with 16,000 students in communities outside our service area.

Visit QCV at [www.quickstartcentral.org](http://www.quickstartcentral.org) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/quickstartcentral).

For additional information, contact [quickstartcentral@comcast.net](mailto:quickstartcentral@comcast.net).



*A racquet in every hand! A smile on every face!*



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