

GRATITUDE REPORT

YOUR SUPPORT OF EDUCATION MATTERS | FALL 2021



INSIDE

Education: A Bold Goal
Preschool Pages
Camp iRock





A BODACIOUS BOLD GOAL—Go Big or Go Home

THE TRUTH! COVID-19 and the interruption of education wreaked havoc on children... and families. Reading took a huge hit. But, not to fear...You are here, helping us get early literacy back on track.

In 2019, United Way of Pickens County set a bold goal that 70% of all Pickens County's third graders will read at grade level by 2025. Reading proficiency at third grade is a critical predictor of school career and life success. Children who are not reading at grade level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

Building good readers starts early. It's really a process. Kids don't teach themselves to read. Adults play a huge role in every child's journey to become a great reader! You are an integral part of our goal to get kids reading.

That is why Women United chose to focus their efforts on preschool aged children. Preschool Pages, Women United's signature program, is a partnership with local elementary schools to support the development of early literacy skills

in preschoolers in the community. Young children and their caregivers participate in story time and related crafts and activities which helps these young learners develop important early literacy skills while learning that school is a safe and nurturing place. Through individual donations, corporate sponsorships, and their annual fundraising event, Luncheon for Literacy, each Preschool Pages child is able to take home books from the program to build their own home library of age appropriate reading material.

EARLY LITERACY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- » The most recent Kindergarten Readiness data shows that approximately 67% of Pickens County kindergartners tested "Not Ready" for kindergarten.
- » 80% of brain development happens in the first three years of life.
- » Early experiences with books, stories, and words make a difference in student success.

YOU CAN ALWAYS TRUST THE DATA

2020-2021 Preschool Pages Results

PRESCHOOL PAGES teachers measure the progress their young learners make using national early literacy standards. Due to the COVID pandemic, Preschool Pages was held both in-person outdoors and remotely this year. Despite the unusual circumstances, young learners still made gains in their early literacy development:

- » 100% could write in pictures and scribbles
- » 45% demonstrated early writing with lines and shapes
- » 90% could hold a book and turn pages Right to Left
- » 73% could use pictures to tell a story
- » 63% learned that text tells a story



► Young learners build home libraries because of your Preschool Pages donations.



► Hands-on activities bring stories—and learning to life.

PARENT FEEDBACK SAYS IT ALL.

- » "He loves to sit and listen to stories."
- » "She loves books! She loves to look at the pictures and have a book read to her!"
- » "My grandson will bring me books to read to him. He is learning that books are fun."

Teachers also notice the difference Preschool pages makes in the lives of their students.

- » "A pair of twins moved here from Florida and didn't know anyone. One was very shy and clung to mom's leg, but by end of Preschool Pages, was much more social. Mom was so thankful she found a program to get connected to other families."
- » "The mother became more relaxed in the setting as they attended each week. She frequently asked questions about behaviors and age appropriate goals for her child."

HOW YOU FUND PRESCHOOL PAGES

LUNCHTIME FOR LITERACY

HELD VIRTUALLY this year, the Women United annual fundraiser, Lunchtime for Literacy, featured nationally acclaimed network news anchor and correspondent, WYFF News 4's Jane Robelot as the special guest speaker. Virtual guests were treated to Jane's moving and heartfelt keynote address about the importance of literacy, Preschool Pages teacher Ruthie Chapman's first-hand account of the impact Preschool Pages has made on young learners, as well as the presentation of the 2021 Literacy Champion Award to Betty Jo Shaw for her dedication and selfless volunteer service as she managed the book orders and delivery for all six Preschool Pages sites across Pickens County.

Through the generosity of the virtual guests and event sponsors, Lunchtime for Literacy exceeded the \$10,000 fundraising goal, allowing Women United to fund nine Preschool Pages sites for the 2021-2022 school year.



► Literacy Champion Betty Jo Shaw and Luncheon hostess Jane Robelot.

CAMP iROCK—TACKLING 3RD GRADE READING HEAD ON!

THANKS TO donors and funders like you, Camp iRock Year 7 was epic. The team was fantastic, but the challenges presented in year 7 required some creative adapting. Because the attrition rate was next to nothing, the classrooms were larger than we expected...but it was okay, because the Camp iRock teachers were phenomenal! They also had so much support from the YMCA counselors and Call Me MiSTER interns.

It wasn't all butterflies and rainbows! There were some behavioral and mental health challenges. That is why we budgeted for one guidance counselor to be located at each of the three sites.

YOU made that possible! Because of you, funding for the guidance counselors was there.

Whitney Moore, the guidance counselor at the Hagood Elementary site in Pickens,

said the children seemed to just want the opportunity to talk... to share about themselves and how they were feeling. Her last lesson was about "hope." They read "A Flicker of Hope," a book about candles and how sometimes our light is dim and we need others around us to brighten our light. Her students talked about times when they might need help from others and how it's important to ask for help.

Mrs. Moore explained that sometimes people hide how they really feel... behind a smile. Several of her students really related to this concept, and a few shared some things that were weighing on their minds.

Do you see a common theme? Camp iRock is so much more than just reading. It's about children and families and self-esteem... and truly believing in yourself.

DRUMROLL PLEASE...

BEFORE I SHARE this year's Camp iRock results, Mrs. Teagan, an exceptional Camp iRock teacher, wants you to know that as teachers, they are measured by the growth a child makes between benchmarks. But to a six-year-old, success is EVERY time he hears words of affirmation and praise.

Children who struggle with reading do NOT feel successful. If not addressed, these feelings of failure follow them throughout their lives.



► **Highly effective teachers help students go from "struggling" to "striving."**

Mrs. Tegan explains, "At Camp iRock, we are dedicated to giving our students a successful learning environment where 'struggling' becomes 'striving.' The true measure of success is the expression on a child's face during our celebration ceremony when they are adorned with a super hero cape and mask. At that very moment, THEY are a SUPER READER HERO!"



► **Small group instruction is a cornerstone of Camp iRock.**

2021 CAMP iROCK RESULTS

1.17

Students grew, on average, 1.17 reading levels

86%

of campers who attended camp 50% or more experienced no learning loss

83%

of campers maintained or increased their reading level

STEP INTO THE MAGIC LOOKING GLASS

I'M SURE YOU MISSED our robust in-person tours. I know I did! Going to Camp iRock and witnessing the wonder in a child's eyes when they "get it" is like water in the desert for me. I know it is for donors like you, too.

Fortunately, our Camp iRock teachers understand how important you are to the success of Camp iRock. Without your commitment to education and to financially supporting early literacy programs like Camp iRock, struggling readers would fall further and further behind. That is NOT acceptable to us, is it?

All during Camp iRock, they send me success stories to share with you. This is one of my favorites.



► No tours this year, but the Camp iRock teachers shared student success stories.

STUDENT SUCCESS STORY: GRANT

WHEN CAMP iROCK teacher Shanelia Rhome-Shannon first met Grant, he was very unmotivated to do schoolwork. He was full of excuses as to why he couldn't do his work. Mrs. Shannon immediately understood Grant's fears and hesitancy and knew he just needed a little encouragement and a push!

"Grant was reading very close to grade level, but he was MAP testing three years below grade level. With the help of my YMCA counselor, Call Me MiSTER intern, and our site guidance counselor, we poured everything we had into Grant. We encouraged him with words and hugs and high fives.

We all worked with Grant, letting him know that he could be successful if he only believed in himself. I witnessed a complete turnaround by week four. Grant was actually reading books during 'Read To Self' time!"

Grant was genuinely excited to share with his reading group what he had learned through his reading. He shared his writing with the class. He also beamed when he shared his final science project: a brochure about thunderstorms, where he had drawn lightning bolts all over the page.

Grant jumped 20 points on his MAP test! All of the adults were over the moon with joy for Grant's turnaround. To seal the deal, he was chosen to receive the highest award at our site for being one of the best all-around campers. His prize? The coveted Kindle Fire.

Working with the adults in the program, and seeing how Grant made such great progress, solidifies the fact that it takes a village to teach children. May Grant take the self-confidence, reading skills, and skills that he built during Camp iRock and use them to continue to be successful during the regular school year.

A FEW MAGIC MAKERS

- ▶ Through a generous donation by the Easley Rotary Club, Dr. Ameca Thomas shared her book, "You Can Be Anything," at our Easley site.



- ▶ Call Me MiSTER interns are Early Education majors who provide invaluable support for Camp iRock.

- ▶ Our YMCA counselors spend their mornings supporting the classroom and afternoons providing more summer camp fun than a kid can handle.



- ▶ Rotary Clubs rocked Camp iRock through generous book donations and volunteering as "Rotary Readers."



NO KID SHOULD FEEL LIKE A FAILURE

HANNAH arrived at Camp iRock feeling completely discouraged. She knew she had scored poorly on her 3rd grade readiness test. Of all the kids in her class, Ms. Day worried about Hannah the most.

"During independent writing time, I noticed that Hannah was capable of SO MUCH MORE!" She just needed someone to believe in her.

Ms. Day "poured" into Hannah. All Hannah needed to hear were four little words: "Your writing is exquisite." Once Hannah found her confidence, she thrived. Her reading

fluency, accuracy and comprehension grew an entire level.

Research proves it. If Hannah doesn't read at grade level by 3rd grade, it will be nearly impossible to catch up.

That is why your financial support of early education programs like Preschool Pages and Camp iRock is so critical...especially now.

With 69 % of 3rd graders testing not at grade level and 76% of kindergarteners "not ready", we don't have a moment to wait. Their future depends on you.

STRUGGLING READERS NEED YOU



THIRD GRADE READING proficiency predicts nearly every societal problem imaginable. That is why United Way of Pickens County set a bold goal of 70% of 3rd graders reading at grade level by 2025. We have a lot of ground to make up. We can't change children's futures without you. Please consider supporting this important early education intervention.

Thank you!

YES, I will support a struggling reader!

- ☐ **\$52** One magical day at Camp iRock for one child
- ☐ **\$125** A year of Preschool Pages for one child
- ☐ **\$520** Two amazing weeks of Camp iRock for one child
- ☐ **\$1,500** Sponsor all programs at one Preschool Pages site
- ☐ **\$1,800** A full life-changing summer at Camp iRock for one child
- ☐ **\$_____** Other special gift to support a struggling reader

Give securely online today: <https://www.uwpickens.org/education>



Your gift helps struggling readers strive!