



Fairfax County Public Library Foundation, Inc.

Motherread®/Fatherread® Literacy Outreach Program



A Children's Literacy Session



A Literacy Session for Parents and Caregivers

Progress Report through June 2005



Fairfax County Public Library Foundation, Inc.

Motheread®/Fatheread® **Literacy Outreach Program Update 2005**

Fairfax County Public Library Foundation, Inc.

Fairfax County Public Library Foundation, Inc. is a private, nonprofit corporation committed to providing supplementary support to the Fairfax County Public Library. The Foundation, while reinforcing the need for continued and increased public support for the Library, serves as a catalyst for attracting private funding from individuals, businesses, organizations and foundations to enhance library services for our community.

Fairfax County Public Library

The mission of the Fairfax County Public Library is to enrich individual and community life by providing and encouraging the use of library resources and services to meet the evolving educational, recreational and informational needs of the residents of Fairfax County and Fairfax City.

The *Motheread®/Fatheread®* Literacy Outreach Program

Motheread®/Fatheread® is a successful national program, operating in 35 states, including Virginia, to promote family literacy, critical thinking, and family communication. The program was created in 1987 by Nancye Brown Gaj of North Carolina, whose efforts were recognized by President Clinton with a 1998 Presidential National Endowment for the Humanities citation. The program was named a "Model Literacy Program" by the Barbara Bush Foundation.

The Library adopted the national *Motheread®/Fatheread®* program and model as the foundation for its own Literacy Outreach project. *Motheread®/Fatheread®* provides the opportunity for groups of parents, caregivers, and children to meet weekly to read and discuss children's classics in locations readily accessible from their homes. Recognizing the strength of the Library as a cultural and learning "town square," the Fairfax County Public Library, with sponsorship of the Foundation, field-tested the *Motheread®/Fatheread®* program in 2001 to promote literacy among young children in one at-risk community.

There are currently five *Motheread®/Fatheread®* certified instructors and approximately 30 volunteers ranging from instructors to processing help. These include the Community Outreach Director; the Woodrow Wilson Library branch Information Assistant; the Sherwood Regional branch Children's Librarian; and two volunteers. Of the 30 volunteers, 8 are actively seeing children and adults on a continuing basis.

In Fairfax County Public Library, the book discussion groups and related activities involving children and their parents and caregivers are scheduled weekly at various community centers and day care centers within several of the library's service areas surrounding George Mason Regional Library in Annandale; Woodrow Wilson and Thomas Jefferson Community Library branches in Falls Church; John Marshall Community Library and Sherwood Regional Library in Alexandria and Lorton Community Library. The program is publicized primarily through direct contact with prospective participants at Head Start Centers, community resource centers, teen parenting classes, healthcare agencies, community centers, adult education centers, immigrant and refugee agencies, and neighborhood centers.

In Virginia, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities provides "Using Story as a Way to Teach" an intensive training institute where leaders learn how to implement the *Motheread®/Fatheread®* model and curriculum in local communities. Parents, some of them learning to read themselves in the process, become reading role models for their children.

The objectives of the program are:

- To improve parents' own literacy skills;
- To increase reading to children by parents;
- To increase parents' ability to use children's books as a means of introducing issues for family discussion;
- To provide specific methods for sharing books with children; and
- To create a network among agencies working with children and their families, thereby improving communication, resource sharing and the stimulation of collegial relationships.

Annual Accomplishments through June 2005

In the past year, 4,800 children and 3,872 parents/caregivers were participants in 314 programs; 7,387 books were distributed. *This is our baseline activity for the upcoming year by no means does this reach its maximum potential.* We would like to eventually expand the program to reach *all* the County-supported Computer Learning Centers, Child Care Centers, and other organizations that serve at-risk children to reach the entire target population. The Foundation will continue seeking funding from foundations and corporations specifically to expand the reach of the *Motheread®/Fatheread®* program.

The Fairfax County Public Library Foundation's implementation of *Motheread®/Fatheread®* is now in its fourth year. Partnerships have formed between Fairfax County Public Library and the Department of Family Services; Fairfax County Public Schools Adult and Community Education program; Office for Children; March of Dimes; Northern Virginia Literacy Council; Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning; Communities in Schools; Starbucks; Barnes & Noble Booksellers; the Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services and most recently through federal omnibus appropriations bill, the Institute of Museums and Library Services.

This program has been established in Greater Mt. Vernon; Gum Springs Children's Center; Gum Springs Glen; Higher Horizons; A.C.C.A. Child Development; Groveton and Sacramento Head Start Centers; Bryant Alternative High School's teen parenting program; Parklawn Family Resource Center; Parklawn Elementary School; Groveton Elementary School's summer reading book van; Lorton Station Elementary Scholl's parent program; private homes of Department of Family Services (DFS) state certified child care providers; Creative Play School, Inc.; Kinder Care Learning Center; Woodlawn Gardens Nursery; DFS Parent Nurturing Program; 17 English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as part of Fairfax County Public School; Janna Lee Community, Washington Square, Lafayette and Murraygate Village apartment complexes; South County and Falls Church Government Health Department waiting rooms; Women, Infants and Children (WIC) offices; Office For Children; Children's Play Room; Crestwood, Timber Lane and Bailey's Family Resource Centers through the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia; Lorton Station School Parent program; March of Dimes family program; Wolf Trap outreach educational program; Culmore Family Resource Center; the Communities in Schools reading van; Progresso Hispano and the James Lee Community Center.

The Need for Literacy Outreach

There are simply not enough programs to combat the pervasive growth in the percentage of non- and low-literate individuals and families in Fairfax County. Immigrants and their children make up the majority of this growth. At the same time, literacy¹ is no longer defined as the simple decoding of letters into words. To be successful in today's economy and educational system, adults and children must be able to interpret and integrate written words into useful information². There are insufficient resources within the Library System's existing structure to respond to this need for literacy support.

The *Motheread®/Fatheread®* program is a very successful step toward developing literacy among low-literacy families with preschool children. The program does not operate in isolation but as a stepping stone to other Library- and Community-sponsored literacy opportunities such as the Fairfax County Public Library's Summer Reading Program and tutorials through The Literacy Council. One key to the program's success is that it begins with very young pre-schoolers, but includes their parents and caregivers all along the way. Since *Motheread®/Fatheread®* began three years ago, it has reached impressively large numbers of people some of whom would not otherwise have had any reading experiences.

1 The National Literacy Act of 1991 was enacted to stem the growth in national illiteracy rates, which Congress found to be so severe that the economic well-being of the nation was threatened. Literacy is defined as the skill needed to ensure "the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives." The law may be found at <http://www.nifl.gov/public-law.html>

2 A direct consequence of low literacy is failure to thrive in school and later in the workplace, one of the fuels for increased gang membership and activity—so much so that gang control and prevention is the number one priority of chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 2004. The Library is also partner in an anti-gang mentoring proposal to the US Department of Education.

Motheread®/Fatheread® implementation in Fairfax County began as a pilot of the nationally-developed *Motheread®/Fatheread®* program that has enjoyed continued success for nearly two decades. The results of the program are even more important than the numbers. In Fairfax County, the Community Outreach Director reaches into the community to the places where gatherings and social events are in the actual neighborhoods where high levels of reading deficiencies are most likely to exist.

Community Impact

Based on repeated feedback, successive visits and repetitive involvement are making a difference to participants. In addition, trust is built, replacing fear of becoming involved in public and visible programs held by some immigrant families. From that trust, families are encouraged to seek out other resources in the community, better supporting their need to become established and care for themselves and their children. They also learn that their local library is a safe place to find information crucial to their assimilation into their new country and community.

Relationships are nurtured not only between Mary Knapp, our Community Outreach Director, and the *Motheread®/Fatheread®* program participants, but between the participants themselves. They begin talking to each other, sharing, brainstorming, networking, helping each other. Not only do adult participants learn the simple fundamentals of *how* to read a book to their children, but many adult participants are surprised to learn that children's books can provide practical information on how they can help the issues that arise in not only their children's lives but in their own lives as well.

Increasingly, children are unprepared for school and for success later in life; and illiterate parents are unable to guide their children through the steps to full community participation and success.

Taking *Motheread®/Fatheread®* programs out into the community has enabled the Community Outreach Director, Mary Knapp, to establish partnerships allowing all of them to strengthen goals and maximize efforts. Mary is in frequent contact with the Literacy Council of Northern Virginia and with other local agencies and organizations regarding new projects and partnerships. Periodically, she is asked to aid them in their efforts to build community partnerships by making referrals, introductions or suggestions.

Program evaluation

Project evaluation is continuous and formative, i.e., feedback is used for gleaning new ideas to keep the program fresh and effective.

At the end of each program series, usually a sequence of four sessions, a post-test evaluation is distributed to all the parents of all participants in English *and* Spanish.

Among the questions are:

- What did you like most about the program?

- What books did your child like the most? Why?
- Did you read and re-tell any of the stories at home?
- Did you ask your child any questions about the story?
- Do you have any suggestions about the program?

Respondents note the following:

- They want more programs.
- Want to add additional groups.
- They believe the program is very high quality.
- Groups like those at Parklawn Elementary have solicited feedback from parents confirming that *Motheread®/Fatheread®* is well respected and appreciated.
- They feel that *Motheread®/Fatheread®* has had a positive influence on their lives.

On a sampling basis, library card registrations resulting from participation in the program are also tallied. Those registrations are growing—strong evidence that the program is being effective in terms of personal development and empowerment. While there are no statistics available yet to measure the cost-effectiveness of *Motheread®/Fatheread®*, there is no doubt that lives are being changed, especially those of children, and at a cost that is miniscule compared to the alternatives of the costs of failed lives. In the long term, the Foundation hopes that the program will result in higher levels of literacy, academic achievement, and success in later life. Research has shown that the more a child reads, is exposed to language, and is read to, the greater his or her command of written and spoken language, reasoning skills, and general knowledge of the world.

Community Impact

Motheread®/Fatheread® builds consistency and trust with participants that meet for at least 4-6 weeks through many community groups. This maximizes the program's impact as successive visits are encouraged through the program. By carefully selecting partners in high-need areas, books are being given away to those most likely to benefit from them. For some of these children, *Motheread®/Fatheread®* books are their first and only books.

This literacy outreach program shows participants how to read a book and become engaged with others. (Many book giveaway programs only put books in people's hands, but don't give them the tools to share and enjoy.) Recommendations for additional partnerships arise from existing community group relationships. Many of these organizations have come forward to express their pleasure with *Motheread®/Fatheread®*, especially when compared to their experiences with other literacy programs.

Motheread®/Fatheread® beyond 2005

The Foundation and Fairfax County Public Library are committed to sustain *Motheread®/Fatheread®* and to increase its reach as much as possible. However, program funding depends on continued grant awards and private donations. There are not sufficient public funds available at this time to sustain the program beyond this calendar year at its present level. To help ensure the program's long-term sustainability, the Fairfax County Public Library Foundation is considering a number of options. In addition to raising annual operating support for the program, the Foundation recently established a separate endowment category to receive earmarked endowment monies that will be used to support the program on a continuing basis

Partnerships are currently being established to expand into the Reston area at Community and Recreation Centers and to offer the *Motheread®/Fatheread®* Literacy Outreach Program with the Opportunities, Alternatives & Resources (OAR) Fairfax Fatherhood collaborative.

Since this program is supported through grants and public and private funds from individuals, foundations and corporations, its ability to grow is limited to the funds that are made available each year. With additional funding, we will be able to train new *Motheread®/Fatheread®* instructors; expand services and sites; provide more books; include Spanish instructors; provide services to faith-based groups; locate groups not receiving services from other agencies; and build partnerships with more private and public agencies and organizations.

Fairfax County Public Library Foundation, Inc.

Motheread®/Fatheread®
Literacy Outreach Program

Fiscal Year 2005 OPERATING BUDGET

Administration	15,000.00
Books	33,268.00
Outreach Director -- Contractual	56,316.00
Intern -- Contractual	2,500.00
Miscellaneous	200.00
Printing	1,933.00
Supplies	100.00
Training	4,606.00
Travel	<u>2,275.00</u>
Total Expense	<u><u>\$116,198.00</u></u>

Special Thanks to the following supporters of
literacy outreach within our community through
the Fairfax County Public Library Foundation's
Motheread®/Fatheread® Literacy Outreach Program

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Note: This report lists organizational donors who have contributed to the Motheread®/Fatheread® program through June 30, 2005. Great care has been taken to assure the accuracy and completeness of this list; however, if there should be an omission or error, we express our sincere regret and ask that you bring it to our attention. Please contact us at Fairfax County Public Library Foundation, Inc. 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 324; Fairfax, VA 22035; phone (703)324-8300; e-mail info@fcplfoundation.org.