

the MISSION

of the Youth Advocacy Project for Routt County (YAP) is to enhance the effective services of Routt County agencies serving special needs, at-risk, and/or low income youth through financial and hands-on support.

Spring 2016



Letter from the Director The Gift of Reading and Closing the Gap for Underserved, Marginalized Youth

All children benefit from parental involvement; no one could argue with that fact. We know children whose parents are involved show greater social and emotional development, including more resilience to stress, increased life satisfaction, better mental health and social adjustment, as well as supportive relationships and tolerance. The evidence surrounding the benefits of parents being involved in their children's education in general, and their children's literacy activities in particular, is overwhelming. Parental involvement in their child's literacy practices is a more powerful force than other family background variables, such as social class, family size, and level of parent education. (*National Literacy Trust, Flouri & Buchanan, 2004.*)

Parents who are able to invest time and financial support in their children are now doing this more than ever, while lower income families, most likely headed by a single parent, are finding themselves further behind and more stretched for time, energy, and resources to provide for their children. (*National Summer Learning Association, New York Times February 9, 2012, Education Gap Grows Between Rich and Poor.*)

Through YAP, it is our goal that all children can have equitable access to the fundamental basics of a quality education, which clearly includes the gift of reading. It has long lasting positive benefits for those who develop proficient reading comprehension skills. Fourth grade is the watershed year according to research and studies; children who do not read proficiently by the end of 4th grade have a 78% chance of not catching up. (*Begin to Read, Literacy Statistics from US Bureau of Justice, Statistics Special Report, 2003.*)

For underserved and marginalized children who are unable to adequately access reading, the negative consequences are often lifelong and create a spiraling effect with a myriad of other social, employment and life advancement opportunities closed off, not to mention a direct link with delinquent behavior and crime. (*US Bureau of Justice, Statistics Special Report, 2003.*) The good news is that interventions CAN make a difference! Right here in Routt County, organizations are making that achievement gap smaller by helping parents to learn to read proficiently themselves, promoting family literacy activities, and getting kids involved in meaningful summer reading programs. We are proud to partner annually with Integrated Community, supporting School Readiness initiatives, which include their dynamic CMC Family Literacy program and Study Friends tutoring program. We are also proud to partner annually with First Impressions, funding their Best Practices Program which benefits early learning centers and programs all through the county. In addition to annually supporting Hayden, SOROCO and Steamboat Springs school districts, we help fund many impactful nonprofit summer



programs, such as Totally Kids in Hayden, Town of Oak Creek Summer Camp, and BookTrails' Reading on Ranches, which proactively include reading opportunities and improved literacy as key goals to help avoid the summer slide for all youth, including their at-risk and low income participants. ■

Sara Craig-Scheckman
Executive Director

Summer Reading

Many adults associate a summer vacation with lazy days, maybe on a beach, and kicking back with a good book. For children, their summer vacation goals might include sleeping in, going to the pool and getting together with friends. But taking time out of the day to read? Probably not a child's first or even second choice! Unfortunately, compelling national research shows more and more that if kids don't read on a regular basis they lose their reading skills, and this "slide" is particularly adverse over the summer months when they are not in the habit of reading or studying. This is especially true for at-risk youth or children from low income families who do not have equitable access to summer learning opportunities in the first place.

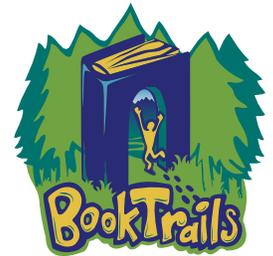
We are very fortunate here in Routt County to have many different avenues available to children from all walks of life to immerse themselves in books during the summer. BookTrails, a local nonprofit founded by Emily Krall in 2011, is one such organization. With a mission to promote a love of literacy in all people, their summer program, Reading on Ranches, is aimed directly at children beginning in first grade through middle school-aged teens. BookTrails strives to incorporate reading and writing enrichment activities in conjunction with the outdoors. With camps such as "Little House on the Prairie," "Ultimate Survival," "Harry Potter," "Camp Splash," and "Magic Tree House," there are interesting reading groups for all children! The diversity of camps offered is great, and research shows that it is imperative to match the child's reading level and interest with the appropriate book; then, with guidance, youth retain or improve their reading skills since they are able to ask questions to better comprehend what they are reading. An added bonus is that these camps are held on local ranches throughout Routt County to not only foster a love of literature, but also as a way to connect kids with local history and the environment.

About half of the children who attend Reading on Ranches are under-performing in school, and have been referred to the program by teachers and other school staff. Substantial scholarships are available for those who cannot afford the fees. These children improve skills through practice and exposure to reading, as well as being around positive role models, including peers who are strong readers. Emily Krall says that, "a big part of the reading puzzle is centered around vocabulary" or lack thereof. To help improve language skills, each child receives a BookTrails journal; reading



and writing are complementary skills, and BookTrails creates new ways to experience the joy of doing both. Campers have one activity each day that involves writing. For example, during the Harry Potter Camp, kids must write a letter that will be delivered by owl as Harry does in J.K. Rowling's popular series. Journal entries are checked for spelling errors, and the kids get to keep their journals when camp is over. BookTrails staff give the kids a vocabulary test when they first arrive at camp. By the end of the week each child has learned an average of three new words. Language is integral to comprehension so learning new words is an excellent way to improve reading skills and to more fully enjoy a book. Children also get to participate in "Readers Theatres" where they act out tales and parts of books. This is another way for kids to better understand a story.

Summer is always a fun and exciting time for children – at least at the beginning. As the summer draws on, kids often get bored. What better way to occupy children and send them on an inexpensive journey by getting them immersed in a book where they can experience thrills, adventure, and new worlds! It is so important to encourage children to read throughout the year, but especially during the summer months. By continuing to read they will maintain their learning skills and have a better transition into school in the fall. The effects of summer learning programs will last well into the future and best of all, these programs are a lot of fun!



Visit mybooktrails.org to learn more about their Reading on Ranches summer camps. ■

Did you know...

- **Children's early vocabulary skills are linked to their economic backgrounds. By 3 years of age, there is a 30 million word gap between children from the wealthiest and poorest families.**
(Colker, L. J. (2014). The word gap: The early years make the difference. Teaching Young Children, 7(3): 26–28. www.naeyc.org/tyc/article/the-word-gap)
- **34% of children entering kindergarten lack the basic language skills needed to learn how to read.**
(Council on Early Childhood. (2014). Literacy promotion: An essential component of primary care pediatric practice. Pediatrics, 134(2): 404–409)
- **The achievement gap between children from high and low-income families is roughly 30 to 40% larger among children born in 2001 than among those born twenty-five years earlier.**
(National Summer Learning Association. New York Times, Feb. 9, 2012, Education Gap Grows Between Rich and Poor, Studies Say. Sean F. Reardon, Stanford University, Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality and the Uncertain Life Chances of Low-Income Children)
- **Two out of three students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare. Over 70% of America's inmates cannot read above a 4th grade level.**
(www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-literacy-america Write Express Corporation. "Literacy Statistics." Begin to Read. Accessed February 24, 2015.)
- **1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read.**
(www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-literacy-america Write Express Corporation. "Literacy Statistics." Begin to Read. Accessed April 16, 2014.)
- **Nearly 85% of the juveniles who face trial in the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate, proving that there is a close relationship between illiteracy and crime. More than 60% of all inmates are functionally illiterate.**
(www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-literacy-america Blankenship, John. "Functional illiteracy continues to grow, but there is help." The Register-Herald. Accessed April 16, 2014)



Vision

The Youth Advocacy Project for Routt County (YAP) envisions a strategic network of collaborative, sustainable youth serving agencies that builds resiliency in youth and guides them towards their optimal potential.

Calendar of Events

June 6 - July 8
CSFF Office Closed

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