

# 2022



Always Reading, Inc.

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# ANNUAL REPORT



**PRESENTED BY :**  
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# Letter from the Founder/CEO Ramona Johnson



It is hard to believe we started this incredible journey five years ago. And while the ride has not always been smooth as a bit of turbulence is expected on a long journey, through the ups and downs, the twists and turns, and an unprecedented global pandemic, we are not only still in the air, we are gasped up, going strong and excited as ever to fly to new heights.

We entered 2023 with much hope and anticipation. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted student learning and achievement in unexpected and significant ways with most of the country seeing reading levels decline. This decline makes our work and the work of so many others more important now, than ever before.

In our first five years, we have grown our Achieving Through Reading Program to include 11 Title I Schools. I am inspired and immensely proud of the work of our board, volunteers, partner schools, sponsors, supporters, and all who have helped us advance our mission. We could not have come this far without you, and I am confident in our future knowing that we have your support and that of the community to propel us.

We strongly believe that education is the gateway to success, and it starts with reading. We remain committed to putting new and free books into the hands of children who need books the most and I am excited about continuing to grow the number of children we reach. Our goal is to support the journey of success for all the children who pick up a book from our kiosk, take it home, read it, place it in their home library and repeat.

I can't wait to see what the next five years have to offer.

Ramona Johnson, CEO & Founder of Always Reading, Inc., has more than 30 years of experience in housing and community development and has spent most of that time focused on underserved populations and minority groups.

In July 2004, Ramona was appointed by the Governor of Maryland to serve a five-year term on the Baltimore County Board of Education. She was reappointed in August 2009 to another five-year term. Ramona has and continues to devote her life to helping children.

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**Our children need books more than ever. Therefore, we will continue to supply books to children in need because maintaining and advancing literacy levels is of the utmost importance.**

# Meet the Board of Directors



Jaclynn Cross  
Secretary



Recognizing the joy of reading at a young age puts children on a path to become a lifelong learner and builds resilience, empathy, communication skills, and happiness. All children deserve the joy of reading and the opportunity to explore the possibilities available to them.



Kelsey Pope  
Treasurer



Literacy is an area where children and their families can engage in countless meaningful journeys, without having to leave their homes. I enjoy promoting literacy in all aspects of a readers' life so that they may truly read their world.



Laynita L. Cichy-  
Berkebile



Learning how to read is the most powerful thing a child can do. Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.



Valerie Watkins



Books can offer a pathway to knowledge about people, places and things. Knowledge that a young person may not otherwise be exposed. The more a young person pursues that pathway through reading, the better equipped they'll be to understanding who they are and the richness they bring to the world.



India Artis



Having worked for a magazine for over thirty years and now serving as an archivist, I know the importance of reading to gain knowledge. My work entails research and the more I research, the more I want to read and learn.





Always Reading, Inc.  
Established 2017

# Vision/Mission

***Our vision is that all children can see positive reflections of themselves in books and that each child has access to books that inform and inspire them about the richness of Black History which is American History.***



Studies show that a child growing up in a home containing at least 80 books, creates huge benefits, such as building vocabulary, increasing comprehension and overall better educational outcomes. Always Reading envisions that each child, especially African Americans and other children of color have an abundance of diverse books in the home. It should come as no surprise that children from low-income households have fewer books in the home and oftentimes fewer books in the school.

For us to realize this vision of racial equity, we distribute a carefully curated selection of free books. Our goal is to get as many free books into the hands of children who need them the most, so they can be empowered for life.



**My daughter loves her book. She enjoyed it so much, she said to be sure I get some real good books for her today.**

**Scotts Branch Parent**



## Achieving Through Reading

Our Achieving Through Reading Program is one of a kind, as no other organization does it like we do. We provide NEW and FREE quality books on a continuous basis to our partner Title I Schools. Each student has the opportunity to select a book or two from the shelf, take it home, read it, and create or add to the creation of their home library. To date, we have provided thousands of books to children who need books the most.

Our partner schools receive a supply of carefully curated diverse picture and chapter books for kids from kindergarten to 5th grade throughout the calendar year. We recognize the importance of summer reading, so July and August are included.

Our goal is to provide knowledge, wisdom, information, and some fun in the books we provide. Moreover, we are mindful of how important it is for our children to see themselves reflected positively in books, and therefore offer a wide variety of titles on African American History.

## How It Works

We provide the partner Title I school with signage along with a bookcase that can hold between 70 to 100 books. Always Reading volunteers replenish the supply of new books that have been provided through the kindness and generosity of our donors, partners, and supporters. The bookcase is visible and easily accessible for all students.

## How you can support our work

In order to fulfill the goals of the Achieving Through Reading Program, we need new donated books and funding. As stated, our books are carefully curated to ensure we have a wide selection of new and diverse books that help expand a child's knowledge of self and of the world.







Always Reading, Inc.

**Established 2017**



I have my kid in Scotts Branch and she's a 5 year old so she's supposed to be in Kindergarten but she's going to grade 1. It's been amazing joining Scotts Branch, getting all of the benefits from Always Reading. Just today, I walked in to pick up some stuff from school for her and here I am getting extra books. She loves the books and to read in general. I have to put in the work. I have to put in my time. If I have to go buy the books that's more money for me; I have to work extra hours to get that money. Always Reading gives her variety and now ,the burden of the spending is off me. I have the time to sit with her and to read with her; that's my part to play. But even when I'm not with her, she goes to pick up the books because of the pictures incorporated. And she looks at the word and says "mommy!!! I've seen this word before! How do adults say it?" Stuff like this helps the kids. Thank you so much for your support for the community.

*Scotts Branch Parent*

# Our Impact



I like reading Jason Reynolds' track series. It's funny. My favorite one is Ghost, because he was hilarious, and he did dumb stuff which was funny and I liked the book. *Local Middle School Boy*

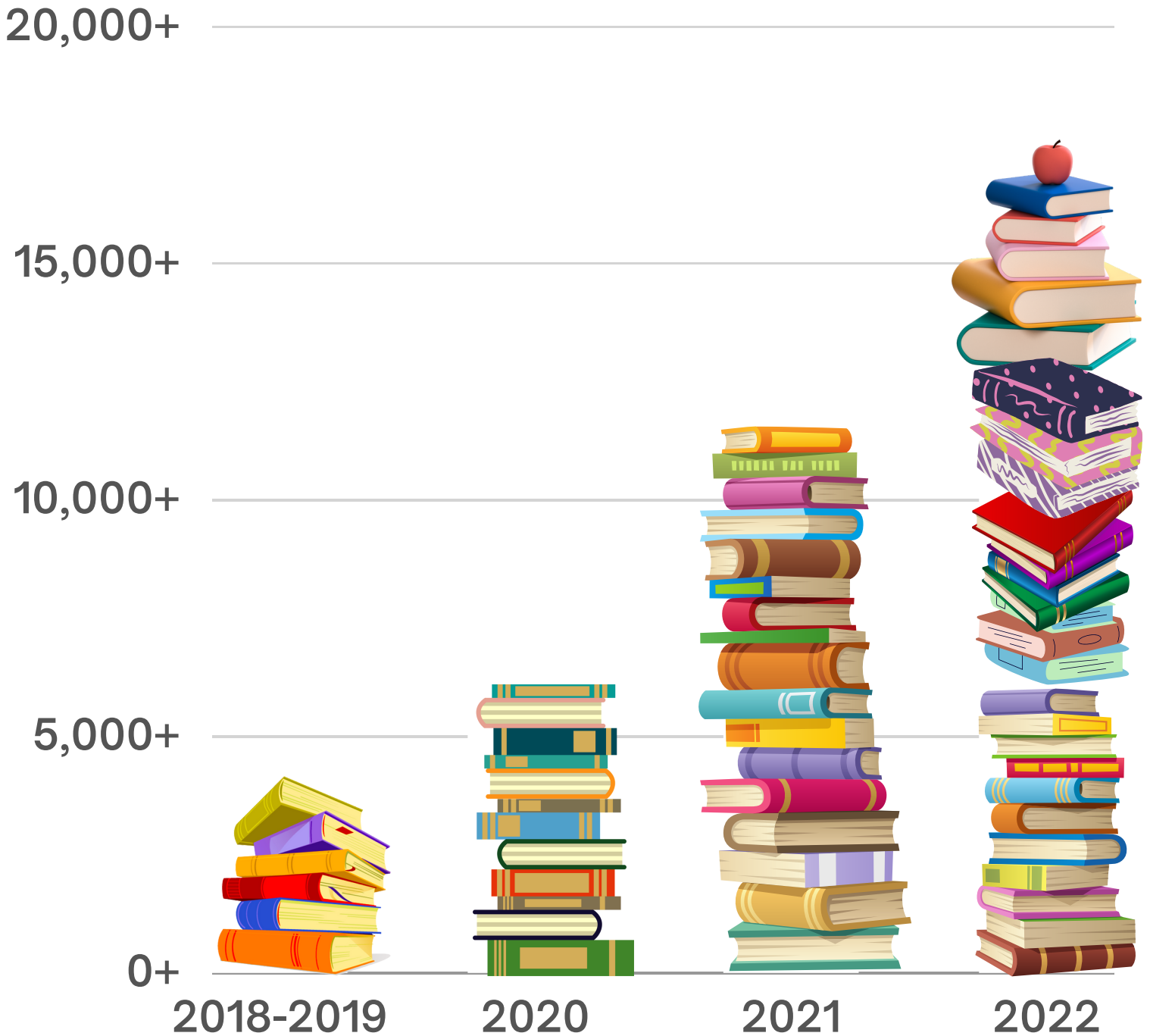


I like reading because I read for hours and never get bored and continue reading other books and enjoy the genre of the books

*Local Middle School Girl*



# Book Distribution 2017-2022



# Supporters, Partnerships & Features



Guilford Elementary  
Longfellow Elementary  
Running Brook Elementary

## Baltimore County Schools:

Edmondson Heights Elementary  
Featherbed Elementary  
Hernwood Elementary  
Randallstown Elementary  
Scotts Branch Elementary

## Baltimore City Schools:

Gardenville Elementary  
Morrell Park Elementary & Middle

## Chicago Public Schools:

Reavis Elementary Math & Science School

## Catonsville Presbyterian Church

Christian Temple

**Over 15,000 books distributed in 2022!**

# Features



## NONPROFIT 'ALWAYS READING' GETS BOOKS IN THE HANDS OF UNDERSERVED STUDENTS

At Always Reading, officials provide free books that expose children of color to many untold stories and books that haven't received any exposure. "We highlight that African Americans are often overlooked. Famous people and others like Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Owens, and others," Johnson said. "We search deep for these books, and we provide them all free." The overall goal of Always Reading is to provide children in Title I schools with a variety of fiction and nonfiction books that portray a positive reflection of themselves and expose them to the rich history of African Americans, Johnson said.

<https://baltimoretimes-online.com/news/education/2021/10/01/nonprofit-always-reading-gets-books-in-the-hands-of-underserved-students/>



## RUNNING BROOK PARTNERSHIP PROVIDES DIVERSE BOOKS TO BUILD HOME LIBRARIES, INSPIRE READING

Always Reading supplies a bookshelf and books that are carefully curated and cover a wide range of topics and genres, with the goal of providing students access to information and stories that they might not find elsewhere. This includes books on African-American history and African Americans who have made important contributions in science, literature, sports, and other areas. The books are also a mix of newly published material and "classics" like Ezra Jack Keat's "The Snowy Day."

<https://news.hcpss.org/news-posts/2022/01/rbes-partnership-provides-diverse-books-to-build-home-libraries-inspire-reading/>





# Social Media Posts



*Did you know?*

Only 12% of children's books were created by authors and illustrators of color in 2016.

www.alwaysreading.org

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Always Reading, Inc.

**CARLA HAYDEN** is the first woman and first African American to lead the Library of Congress.

www.alwaysreading.org

**Did you know?**

**54%** of Americans between 16-74 read below a sixth-grade level.

Always Reading, Inc. www.alwaysreading.org

**PRAISE FOR WOMEN**

*Women's History Month*

*Who was...* **1869-1957**

**Annie Turnbo Malone**

created a haircare line, founded Poro College, a cosmetics school, and became one of the first Black female millionaires.

*Who was...* **1939-**

**CLAUDETTE COLVIN**

refused to give up her bus seat nine months before Rosa Parks.

**Black History Month**

*We salute!*

**W.C.B. Du Bois**

NAACP Founder, The Crisis Founder, The Crisis Civil Rights Activist, Historian, Sociologist, Pan-Africanist

**Black History Month**

*We salute!*

**Jessie Redmon Fauset**

Editor, Poet, Essayist, Novelist, Educator

**Black History Month**

*We salute!*

**James Baldwin**

Writer of essays, novels, plays, and poems

**Maria Tallchief** was the first Native American woman to hold the rank of prima ballerina.

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The Cherokee were one of the "Five Civilized Tribes," located in the southeastern United States. By the 1600s, the Cherokee controlled roughly 40,000 square miles in the region of the Appalachian Mountains.

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**DID YOU KNOW?** **Alice Walker**

was the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1983.