

# Reading to Kids...

whatgives

By Marijane Miller/ Dec 29, 2009

The best part about Christmas is the bounty o' books that often comes my way. Yep, I'm a reader. (h/t to **Bill Hicks** fans everywhere) And you may be aware that I'm also a **library lover**. So you can bet that anything that encourages kids to read is going to be on my short list of faves.

I remember the **Reading is Fundamental** campaign from the 1970s and how odd it seemed to me as a kid that there were other kids who didn't already have books. It was just... *wrong*. What's really, really wrong, though, is that 40 years later there are still kids who don't have books. Fortunately, RIF is **still there**, doing their best to get books into the hands of those children who hunger for stories – which, by the way, is ALL children.

But the love of reading – and the endless **benefits** being a good reader provide – starts before a child can read on his own. It starts the first time someone reads that child a story. Reading to young children is essential to their brain development, their socialization skills, their ability to succeed in school, and their ability to achieve in life.

**Reading to Kids** is a grassroots organization in Los Angeles that gathers over a thousand kids together the second Saturday of every month. Volunteers read aloud to these elementary school children while their parents are shown how to encourage their children to read at home. Plus Reading to Kids gives books to kids, parents, teachers, and school libraries. Read a book, talk about a book, explain the importance of books, share the fun of books, and then give a book. Nicely done.

**RTK** has an, um, interesting approach to their annual donor drive. They simply try to get one more donor each year than they had the year before. So, for 2009, they're shooting for 894 total donors. Jason Axe, RTK Treasurer says, "we're getting close to our goal, but we're not quite there yet." There are only a few days left till the end of the year and for the cost of a paperback book you could make a real difference in a kid's life. So, **give 'em a click**. Or, if you've always loved making up the voices of all the Whos in Whoville, why not **volunteer**? A few hours one Saturday a month ("in by 9, out by noon") is easy enough, and you'll have a blast reading to those very enthusiastic boys and girls.

One other fun thing for those of you not in the LA area: let a few Hollywood stars read to your kid online. The Screen Actors Guild website **Storyline Online** features actors from TV and movies reading great books – which means your child can listen over and over and over and OVER. (yes, sometimes technology is your friend)

Finally, if I'm preaching to the choir and you already read to your kids, way to go. As your reward, here's a link to reading aloud guru **Jim Trelease**'s list of **great books** to share with your children. Enjoy.

And never forget:

*Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read.*

– **Groucho Marx**