

Help change a child's story: Give the gift of literacy

NEW YORK, January 31, 2007—Beat the post-holiday doldrums at a party with purpose. Support childhood literacy through the first annual Books that Build fundraiser.

Starting at 7:00 p.m., the event takes place Monday, February 26, at the ultra-chic Crema Restaurant in Chelsea. The \$100 pre-registration fee (\$120 at the door) includes cocktails and the culinary creations of chef/restaurateur Julieta Ballesteros. All proceeds from the 2007 fundraiser benefit Reach Out and Read (ROR) of Greater New York.

Launched in 1989 at Boston City Hospital (now Boston Medical Center), ROR makes literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care. The national non-profit organization gives new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud in pediatric exam rooms across the nation.

ROR has trained almost 5,000 physicians and nurses in strategies of early literacy guidance. And each year, the organization gives more than 370,000 new, developmentally appropriate books to families.

Recognizing literacy as an integral part of every child's development, Books that Build is the creative offspring of Rebecca Brian and Delphine Fares, young professionals who share a life-long love of reading. Every year, the group—Rebecca and Delphine, joined by like-minded colleagues from diverse industries—plans and promotes a fundraising event, donating all proceeds to a literacy charity of choice. ROR is the 2007 partner.

To learn how you can change a child's story through the gift of literacy, visit www.booksthatbuild.org.

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Early childhood literacy statistics

Children who live in print-rich environments and who are read to during the first years of life are more likely to learn to read on schedule.

- 16% of parents of children age three years and younger do not read at all with their children, and 23% do so only once or twice a week.
- Percentages are even lower among low-income families, whose children face the highest risk of literacy problems.
- Reading difficulty contributes to school failure, which increases the risk of absenteeism, leaving school, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy — all of which perpetuate the cycles of poverty and dependency.
- Families living in poverty often lack the money to buy new books, as well as access to libraries. Parents who were not read to as children themselves may not realize the tremendous value of reading to their own children.
- Educators and developmental psychologists have long considered reading aloud to children important in developing early literacy skills.
- Every year, 35% of American children start school without the language skills necessary to learn to read.
- Older students who struggle with reading are more likely to drop out of school.

(Statistics provided by Reach Out and Read)