

April 2025

Early Childhood Literacy Committee Report

Thanks to Calgary Reads Big Book Sale and the initiatives it supports, every day a child who lives in a home far from opportunity opens a book of their own -- or they get to set aside time with a mentor to strengthen their reading skills.

With early literacy as a key focus area and as stewards of Calgary Reads Big Book Sale, we distributed more than $500,000 in 2024 sale proceeds to help more children experience the life-changing magic of reading.

Rotary Club of Calgary | Calgary Reads big book sale

How we helped raise the next generation of readers in 2024/25

Early Literacy Network - $285,000



The Early Childhood Literacy Network (ECLN) fills a critical gap by connecting a broad, community-based network of agencies enhancing childhood literacy.

Trustees are working with Daughter Creative on a new name to be unveiled spring 2025. The network is committed to advancing an evidence-based early literacy program platform; leveraging more funding from other investors; sharing research; creating an impact evaluation framework and offering netWORDing professional development for educators.

Book Bank - $120,000

Book Bank ensures more children experience the power of book ownership.

Through a network of agencies, and via Little Red Reading House and Little Red Reading Van, Book Bank distributed 34,307 books to children in 2024. Proceeds support the work of the volunteer coordinator and rent at Shedpoint.





YW Calgary - $35,000

Delivered through YW Calgary and hosted by 15 organizations, the Early Talks program helps caregivers improve back-and-forth talk with infants and toddlers to improve a child's vocabulary and school readiness.

Since 2023, Early Talks has served 29 children with Rotary's support. These children saw a 43 percentile point increase in adult words for low-talk families.





Seeding Readers - $25,000

As part of a mission to inspire children to fall in love with reading, every year, Seeding Readers will publish a picture book by a local author. This is now sponsored by the Westman Foundation.

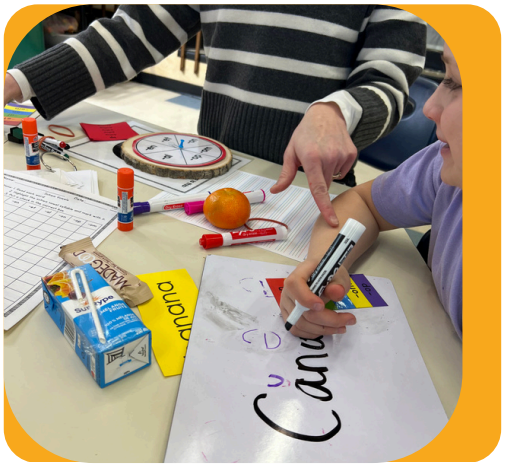
The 2024 book, "Book Bus Magic," was written by Patricia Atchison and brought to life with illustrations by local children. Through the Book Bank pipeline, 700 children will receive copies of this enchanting picture book.

Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation - $20,000

In 2024, the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation embarked on a report entitled 'What will it take to ensure that every child in Canada is ready to learn foundational literacy skills by the age of five?'

This landmark report provides evidence-based recommendations to improve early literacy outcomes and will guide policymakers and educators in strengthening programs.





Vista Heights/MRU- $10,000

As part of a pilot for free after-school literacy support, Mount Royal University teacher candidates meet with two-three students for one hour, twice a week, from January to April to give students extra practice and feedback to strengthen their reading skills.

The aim is to test the success and scalability of the program in hopes of bringing a similar offering to more Calgary schools.

Big Book Club - $20,000

We're excited to announce that we will partner with volunteers to lead Big Book Club. Formerly Literary Kaleidoscope, this book club has been gathering for 30 years to discuss topics and stories of importance--and hear from distinguished speakers.

With a renewal of resources and leadership, the Big Book Club will continue to engage an audience that plays a key role in growing a thriving, reading Calgary.





At the 2024 sale, four Rotary clubs volunteered in groups of 10 or more to receive $10,000 to distribute to local, evidence-based early literacy projects.

Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta - $10,000

Rotary North and Rotary Chinook contributed to the LDAA so it could host a handful of 'Reading & Writing for Meaning' workshops -- and release a new video: 'What is a Psychoeducational Assessment?'

CanLearn Society - $10,000

With this grant from Rotary West, 114 kindergarten to Grade 2 children participated in the WordPlay Program, which teaches early reading skills using the Science of Reading.

Families Matter - $10,000

This grant from Rotary Fish Creek made it possible for the Papa Bears Circle to welcome 110 dads and 124 children in activities that promote father-child bonding and reading fun.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area - $10,000

This grant from Rotary Club of Calgary Chinook grant helped to fund the BBBS Early Literacy Program for children up to age eight.

Thank you to all community volunteers and Rotarians for making these important early literacy investments possible!