



Dear Friends of Literacy and PoWeR! Book Bags,

We hope this news finds you warm, safe, and perhaps enjoying a good bout of winter PoWeR! in your world (playing, writing, and reading, of course).

As we work on the new year planning behind the scenes (budgets, record keeping, grants, etc.), we can't help but marvel at how far we have come in the past three years and just need to share it with you, because without YOU, this would never have happened!

Yes, it is true! On March 4, we will officially reach our **third** year of bringing literacy to children and families in Northern Michigan. (Our other birthday -- when we became real to the IRS -- is coincidentally May 4).

### Once Upon a Time...

We have moved from serving children at three food pantries our first year, to this year in which we are currently at 19 -- soon to be 20 sites! We've moved from one project delivering literacy materials -- books, writing materials & hand-crafted book bags to three big ones: The Original Book Bag Pantry Project, Summer PoWeR! Days, School Vacation Book Give-Aways, and a few others: Books on the Bus, Summer Camp Literacy Fun, & Friday Night Live Literacy Give-Aways.

### TAH-DAH!

In total, we have distributed thousands of books to thousands of kids! For those of you that like stats:

Year 1: 2,000 book bags, 8,000 books

Year 2: 5,500 book bags, 17,000 books

Year 3: 9,500 book bags, 25,000 books

In all, we've distributed: over **17,000 book bags** and **60,000 books**!

### Because...

When children have books in their homes, the research shows that they are more likely to do better not only with reading and scholastically, but also socially, emotionally, and overall. YES! The number of books in the home predicts success in life.

And when children are allowed to select the books that they are interested in, they are more likely to read the books.

And if the books are in the home, the child will read and reread the books, gaining something new every time the book is opened.

Every piece of our program:

- \*from going to where families already are (instead of making them find us), to
  - \*allowing children to select their own books and own individual book bags, to
  - \*inviting children to sign their names inside of their chosen books, to
  - \*the items included for *playing*, *writing*, and *reading*, to
  - \*repeating the process of consistently offering books over and over again to children (rather than just as a one shot event)
- is *deliberate*.

We are taking the research on what helps kids develop strong language and literacy skills to succeed in life and putting the principles into practice.

Our slogan is intentional. With our work, we are empowering children to **Play**, **Write**, and **Read** today for a better tomorrow!

## So, THANK YOU!

We are making a difference and YOU are helping to make that happen.

As a volunteer organization, we depend on you to help us sort and pack books, prep them for give away, sew book bags, fill these bags, and distribute them to children. We also depend on your financial support. Thank you for all that you have done and for all that you will do in the future!

This past year, we've been SO fortunate to receive grants from The Schmuckal Family Foundation, The Bui Family Foundation, The Community Foundation of Mason County, The Grand Traverse Community Foundation, The Leelanau County Community Foundation, The Suttons Bay Bingham Endowment, The Boys and Girls Club of Grand Traverse, and The Youth Advisory Committee of Grand Traverse.

We are also thrilled to be one of the 12 non-profit organizations selected this year for the Traverse City Pour for More crowd funding campaign. **Our month is May**. Stay tuned for more on this exciting opportunity!

## Consider: The Bag Challenge

Have you ever thought of sewing book bags for this project? Challenge yourself and just DO IT! Set a goal for yourself: one book bag a day...a week...a month...a year. Pick the one you are most comfortable with and when you achieve it, take a selfie (or just a pic of the bags). Send us the picture. Drop off (or mail) the bag(s). We will post your picture on our *Wall of Fame* to celebrate that you reached your goal. Just think of the joy you will bring to some child(ren) out there when they pick *your* book bag to treasure. Plus, these bags are easy to make and are the heart of the project. Children truly feel *so* special when they choose a book bag to keep. We even have fabric, ribbons, and pre-cut ready to sew bag kits. We can help you achieve your new goal! Please let us know if you have any questions.

## Or...Sponsor Materials, a P.B.B. Site or a School Book Give-Away!

It is nice to know where your donation goes. With us, it is quite simple. Everything goes to literacy

materials for the kids (unless you specify that you want to help with overhead costs). We have a new idea that we hope appeals to you.

You can choose to sponsor books (.50–1.00 each) or crayons (.75–1.00/box when we get deals!) or puppets (.80 each)

OR

Sponsor a PoWeR! Book Bag Site at a pantry or place of family assistance for a month (\$125–\$500) or a School for a book give-away (\$60–\$500).

Thanks for reading this and for joining our journey to help make the world a better place, one book at a time!

Gratefully,  
*Kara*

P.S. Hope to see you at the Volunteer Meeting on **Monday, February 11, 1–2**, at our site (101 Dame St., #1, Suttons Bay).

**Love to read? Share your love with kids in  
YOUR community! Help us continue our  
work. Please donate today.**

**Visit our website!**