POWER! BOOK BAGS

Empowering children to Play, Write, and Read today for a better tomorrow!

2018 Annual Report

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Letter from the Founder

Dear Friends and hopefully soon-to-be Friends of PoWeR! Book Bags,

It is with continued awe and great gratitude that I write this letter for the annual report. Who could have imagined all that we've accomplished in three short years? Since March of 2016, we have distributed well over 63,000 books and 18,000 book bags to children! This has happened only because of the committed work of our volunteers and the communities in which we are located!

We now serve children in 8 counties: Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Lake, Leelanau, Mason, Oceana, and Wexford. We are currently running 3 ever-expanding programs to help children in Lower Northwestern Michigan increase their literacy experiences and the number of books that they own. Each of these programs has been carefully designed based on strong research in the areas of literacy, social-emotional development, and children.

Our first program, "The Original Pantry Project," has expanded to 18 sites of assistance and food pantries. Our second program, Summer PoWeR! Days, is steadily adding parks and locations to its schedule. We will be hosting these literacy fairs at 6 sites this summer, with each fair featuring opportunities for children to read, write, play literacy games, and take home as many books as they can carry, which translates to thousands given away! Our summer plans also include providing literacy-filled book bags and books for the Salvation Army Camp in Traverse City and the summer school-camps for the migrant programs in Suttons Bay and Frankfort. Finally, our School Vacation Book Give-Aways have become a recognized event at the 10 participating schools. These are our free book fairs, where children select a book to take home and read over vacation, adding it to their expanding personal libraries. Over the course of a year, the children receive 6 books each along with a book bag and writing supplies.

The most exciting thing about our work with children is their energy and growing enthusiasm for literacy. When we began, sometimes it was hard to talk a child into taking a book home from one of our programs. We were so saddened by the one or two (or more) children in the group that professed no desire to pick a book. However, we have listened to the children's requests, and we have figured out a way to help every child find a book. At our last round of School Vacation Book Give-Aways, we had a whopping zero children refuse a book! We are also beginning to see literacy scores increase in some of the schools that we have been working with over the past three years. The correlational research in this area is so solid; the more books a child owns, the better they are likely to do in literacy and so many other aspects of life. It is very exciting to start to see this positive trend in literacy achievement within the schools with which we work. We won't take credit for the improvement, but we sincerely believe that our efforts and the increase of literacy materials available to children in the home is playing a role!

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Letter from the Founder (cont.)

The other day I was at a local library and ran into a child that we've been giving books to since our inception. When PoWeR! Book Bags began, this little one was not interested in reading at all and certainly not interested in taking a book home. We learned about this child's interest: Dinosaurs. This child was in our first newsletter in 2017, where we described the child whom had accrued so many dinosaur books that there was no longer much room in his bed for sleeping! As this child's interests changed from dinosaurs to joke books, we worked to appease his literacy appetite. Now, three years later, this child was so excited at the library to find books with his mom, reading off titles and critiquing books though out the shelves. This child IS a reader. This child IS quite literate now. And this child has received potentially over 75 books from us in the past three years, if every other week the family went to the pantry and also received books at the School Vacation Book Give-Aways. As this child continues to receive books from PoWeR! Book Bags, there will be well over 200 books in his home before he graduates from high school.

Our friend with the dinosaurs and joke books is significant because the research on literacy has found that if a child owns 100 books, he/she is very likely to graduate from high school and pursue higher education. A child with this number of books is likely to not live in poverty, not to become incarcerated, and not to use drugs. A child with this personal library is more likely to contribute in a positive manner to society. The cycle of poverty is potentially broken, all from the simple act of increasing a child's exposure to literacy and growing his/her personal library!

If this isn't power, I don't know what is. This is the potential future for so many of the children that we have the privilege of working with every week!

When I left the library after meeting our 'client', I reflected on why we do what we do, and how to demonstrate that it does make a difference. Then it dawned on me. This ONE child may have a different life trajectory in part because of the collective work of PoWeR! Book Bags. Helping ONE child matters. We are working with about 7,000 children throughout our programs. We have enormous potential to impact many lives. Wow!

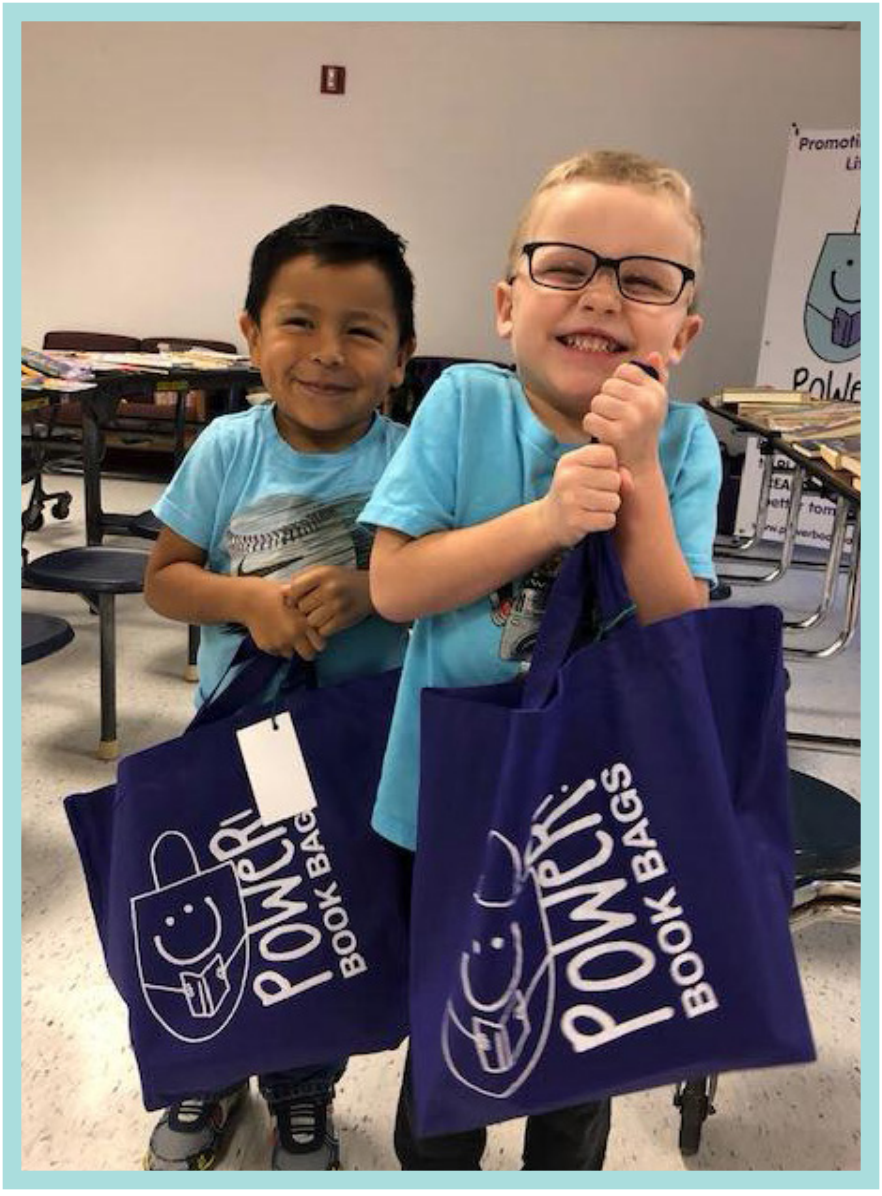
Thank you to everyone who has helped us make that difference in the life of a child. You know the role that you have played already. We are so grateful. Please continue to help us! We need our volunteers and donors! You all play an important role in PoWeR! Book Bags, and we have only just begun. There are so many more children in our area that could benefit from our work. This is a extraordinary journey. I'm so glad to be a part of it alongside our volunteers and donors.

Here's to continued success and growth!

Gratefully,

Kara Murphy Gregory

Our Programs



The Original Pantry Project

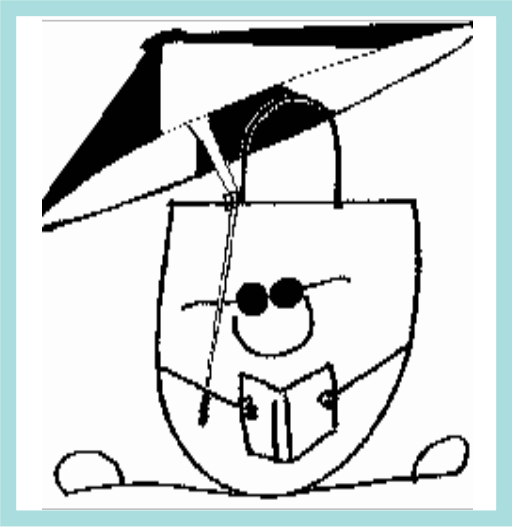
In The Original Pantry Project, children and families visiting food pantries and other sites of assistance select a book bag and books for each child. The book bags contain a finger puppet, two blank create-your-own-story booklets, a pack of crayons, a bookmark, and a welcome card. With each visit, children select more books and writing materials to keep.

Currently, we are serving children and families at 18 sites and counting!

The Salvation Army (Traverse City)
Empire Food Pantry (Glen Lake)
The Goodwill Inn (Traverse City)
The Salvation Army (Ludington)
HELP Ministry (Ludington)
C.O.V.E. (Ludington)
Leelanau Christian Neighbors (Suttons Bay)
The Tabernacle Food Pantry (Buckley)
Fresh Wind Pantry (Honor)
Lakeshore Food Club (Ludington)
Catholic Charities West Michigan (Ludington)
Oceana's Home Partnership (Hart)
Mancelona Pantry and Resale Shop (Mancelona)
Fountain Area Community Center (Fountain)
Immaculate Conception Food Pantry (Traverse City)
Grace Episcopal Church Food Pantry (Traverse City)
Department of Health and Human Services Foster Care of Mason County (Ludington)
Department of Health and Human Services Foster Care Care of Oceana County (Hart)

Summer PoWeR! Days

For Summer PoWeR! Days, we host a free summer literacy fair at participating parks and beaches throughout the regions we serve in Lower Northwestern Michigan. Children that attend these literacy fairs are invited to listen to books read by librarians from participating libraries. Children also are invited to write stories and play literacy games. Finally, they fill book bags with as many books to take home as they desire. We give away thousands of books at the Summer PoWeR! Days.



School Vacation Book Give-Aways

For the School Vacation Book Give-Aways, we go to participating schools and set up a free book fair before each school vacation. Children come and select their 'new' book to keep and read throughout their vacation. At some point in the school year, the children also receive at least one book bag with writing materials and a puppet. It is our goal that every child in the participating schools receive six books during the school year: one before Thanksgiving, two for Winter Break, one for Spring Break, and two for Summer Break.

Books on the Bus

With Books on the Bus, the kids riding the buses to Suttons Bay schools have access to PoWeR! Book Bags. Children select books to add to their personal libraries either on their way on to the bus or as they are leaving the bus.

Summer "Specials" (Camps and Other Events)

During our Summer "Specials," we give books and book bags with literacy materials to kids at local camps and summer school programs. Our previous partners have included the Salvation Army Summer Camp programs in Traverse City and the Migrant camps/schools in Suttons Bay and Frankfort.

We also give books away in Ludington during Friday Night Live. Children are invited to fill their bags with as many books as they can carry!

The PoWeR! Book Bags Board

Kara Murphy Gregory, President, Executive Director, and Founder

Karla Gerds, Secretary

Leslie McInerney, Treasurer

Northern Advisory Board

(Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and Wexford counties)

Penny Campo-Pierce

Kathy Walter

Nancy Pringle

Leigh Fairey

Shawn Walbecq

Mary Woods

Gloria Dean

Connie Riopelle

Robert Randall

Southern Advisory Board

(Mason, Lake, and Oceana counties)

Kathy Bromley

Lisa Makowicki

Patti Skinner

Mykila Althouse

Jacquie Gerould

Kerri Wood

Financial Data 2018

Individual Contributions	$15,992.20
Corporate Matching Donations	$2,508.39
Grants	$14,240.00
Total Income	$32,740.61
Business Expenses	$3,056.75
Literacy Supplies/Operations	$23,993.33
Insurance	$1,196.00
Total Expenses	$28,246.08

Net Income	$4,494.53

By the Numbers

25,000 books distributed in 2018 – 63,000 total in 3 years

9,500 book bags distributed in 2018 – 18,000 total

7,000 kids served over the 3 years

18 sites

10 schools for School Vacation Book Give Aways in 2018 – 13 in 2019

6 grants received in 2018

Testimonials

Help Ministry
910 E. Tinkham Ave
Ludington, MI 49431

September 29, 2018

Dear Kara and others,

HELP Ministry has been excited to be involved with this project in our community as well as helping extend it to others. Our mission at HELP Ministry is to find ways to help our community in whatever way we can. While we are primarily working to provide household goods and services, this project fits nicely with our overall goal of doing good in the community.

We are encouraged by the response of parents and children alike as they look through the books available at our office and search for just the right bag. Various members of the community work to hand make bags for several area locations. Their involvement is an added bonus as they also are working to improve the children and families who take advantage of this program.

To all who are involved with organizing and running this program, thank you for letting us be involved.

Larry Lange
Executive Director
231-843-6811
help@help-ministry.org

Testimonials (cont.)

Suttons Bay Public Schools
500 Elm Street, P.O. Box 367
Suttons Bay, MI 49682
Phone:231-271-8600 Fax: 231-271-8671

May 2, 2019

RE: PoWeR! Book Bags

To Whom it May Concern:

It gives me great pleasure to share how wonderful PoWeR! Book Bags is for Suttons Bay Elementary and to the greater community.

PoWeR! Book Bags has provided books to our students over the last couple of years just before holidays so that students can take a book or two home to read while they are away from the school building. The students are always excited to choose these books and have something to read. They often have titles that are current and relevant to what the student interests are and this is extremely important in building a love of literature and reading.

Suttons Bay Elementary has a high percentage of low income and minority students. Many of our students struggle academically, coming to us in kindergarten with limited vocabulary. We work hard to create a text rich environment at school and provide many opportunities for students to be exposed to multiple texts. We can do this at school, but when our students go home they do not have this text rich environment. Often times when I speak to students they tell me they do not have books at home that they can read.

I know that the more books we can get out into the homes the more reading that will take place by not only the child that chose the book, but by all of the children that live or visit that home in which we can get the books into.

Your support for PoWeR! Book Bags will impact not just this generation, but many generations to come!

Sincerely,

Shawn Walbecq, MS ED
PreK-5 Principal
walbecqs@suttonsbayschools.com
C: 231 866 1956

Testimonials (cont.)

Penny Campo-Pierce
Grace Episcopal Church
341 Washington St.
Traverse City, MI

May 3, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

The Grace Episcopal Church Food Pantry has had the PoWeR! Book Bag program for 2 years. We are open 2 times a week and the patrons are allowed to come 2 times a month. In these 2 years, we have given away 421 bags and 1178 books.

It is generally Moms who come to the Pantry. Every one of them is astonished we give the bags and books away. Sometimes we have to insist it is okay for them to take one bag and 2 books for each of their children the first time they participate. They are so appreciative and overwhelmed. It is fun to hear them talk to themselves while picking this perfect bag for Jenny and that fabulous book for George. They really try to pick something their kids will love. When the kids are out of school and come with their parent, then it gets exciting. To see them mull over exactly which book they want to pick this time is the point of the program: getting books into kids' hands that they have picked, they want to read, and knowing they will read them over and over. Today a Mom was in with her 4 year old son. He zeroed in on the Nemo book on the story book shelf. As Mom picked bags and books for her other two children, I looked at the Nemo book with him. He "read" me the story from the pictures, explaining to me what was going on with the various fish and the "big, bad shark but don't worry, Nemo is safe." His words, not mine.

Seeing the interaction between the parent and the child as they begin to feel the joy of book ownership makes my day brighter. Knowing how important having books in the home is, I'm happy to do what is necessary to bring books into their lives.

Sincerely,
Penny Campo-Pierce
Site Supervisor – Grace Pantry

Gratitude Page

There are so many people who have made our work possible.

We would like to thank our volunteers for sorting, cleaning, organizing, prepping, packing, and delivering literacy supplies to the sites and to children throughout Lower Northwestern Michigan.

We would also like to thank the people whom sew such lovely book bags for the children. These bags represent the heart of our work, helping children feel valued and respected as important members of a literate society.

We would like to thank the businesses that allow our donation bins in their space, donate supplies, share their employees with us during work-bees, and recognize and value what we do through donations of time, energy and money.

Thanks also to our grantors and donors. You know who you are. Without you we would not be able to purchase our literacy supplies for children!

Great things happen through small works of kindness and love. Thank you, everyone, for helping us make the difference in children's lives today and tomorrow through literacy. It takes each one of us collectively to make it all happen!

We are grateful for what we've been able to accomplish so far and are excited for all that is to come. Please continue to join us in this journey!