



Power!
BOOK BAGS

Annual Report 2017



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

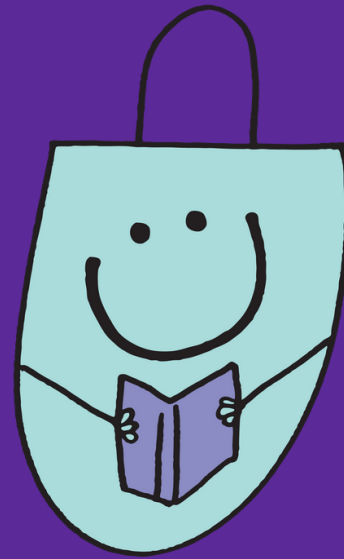
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OUR MISSION

Our mission is to grow children's experiences with literacy by providing them with playing, writing, and reading materials and by expanding the number of books in their personal libraries.

Play + Write + Read = PoWeR!



PoWeR! Book Bags is a 100% volunteer-run non-profit organization based out of Northern Michigan providing ongoing literacy materials to children of all ages at pantries and other sites serving families.



LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER, DR. KARA MURPHY GREGORY

When we began in March of 2016, there were not many of ‘us’. There were a few people with whom I tried my little idea and then we all ran hard with it. I called a few pantries and asked, “Do you give books to kids on an on-going basis? What about writing? And what about play?” We started with three pantries. Who would have ever guessed that this small simple idea of bringing literacy - not just books but playing and writing too - to where people in need are already going (for food, assistance, or shelter) would grow with so much enthusiasm and momentum? We are now at 14 sites and counting.

The word is traveling fast: Literacy makes a difference for EVERYONE. Communication and understanding is increased through literacy. The world is a better place with more possibilities for all when we have a literate society.

I am in awe of all that we have accomplished in bringing not only PoWeR! Book Bags to life, but in cultivating a movement to support literacy for underserved children and their families. Where pantries once upon a time had children sitting in silence, or bored, or causing trouble, these same sites are now places of conversation, playing, writing, and reading! Children and parents alike are engaged in the PoWeR! of literacy.

We started by pulling books from my children's collections. Then we gathered donations from community members and now we have wonderful partnerships with book sellers. Over 30,000 books have been distributed to children in Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Wexford, Benzie and most recently, Mason and Oceana Counties. There has been a shift from late nights at my sewing machine, to the machines of volunteers, to community sewing bees and a mini-army of dedicated men and women sewing beautiful book bags for children! We have distributed over 5,000 book bags to children in Northwest Lower Michigan and 4,500 of these have been donated and crafted by friends of PoWeR! Book Bags for our Pantry Project.

And the beautiful handcrafted bags keep coming! How have we convinced so many sewers to give of their time and talents? Wow. And the volunteers don't stop there. Volunteers head up our crews overseeing pantries and donations. They help sort, pack, and prepare books for distribution. We have had so many kind people who want to make a difference make bags and create-your-own-storybooks on their own and others attend our monthly work bees. Residents at Hawthorn and Evergreen Cottages at the Grand Traverse Pavillions make materials and fill book bags, as do local groups, businesses, and schools. PoWeR! Book Bags helps people find a way to give to others AND helps increase literacy for those who might not have the opportunity. We truly are a community organization.

We are dedicated to making a difference in the world through literacy. I fully believe we are making that happen...one book at a time! Many thanks to ALL who have helped us start this journey! I look forward to our future adventure together.

Kara



PoWeR! Book Bags include:

handmade bag

create-your-own-story
booklet





box of crayons


finger puppet

books selected by child




Why we do what we do.


-  The greater our language experiences, the easier it is for us to learn new things, to imagine solutions to problems, and to generate new possibilities for ourselves and for the world.
-  The amount of language children experience directed at them, especially in the first five years, greatly determines how well they will do in life - when it comes to language, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.
-  Multiple long-term studies have found that the amount of language children experience before entering kindergarten inadvertently places them into learning categories.
-  Therefore, as a society, it is imperative that we find ways to immerse ALL children in multiple rich language experiences.



Reading provides a model for language - books can be used as a starting point for great discussions with children as well as a vehicle for introducing new vocabulary and playing around with the sounds in language.



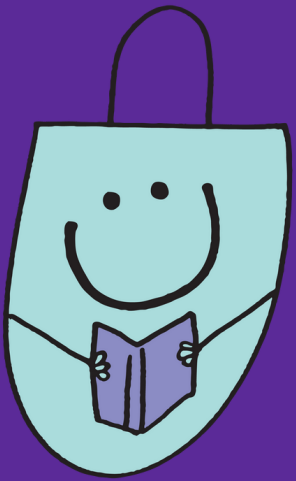
According to the research, the number of books children possess can predict how well they will do in school and how far they will go. Lack of access to books is yet another obstacle for many children.



PoWeR! is our acronym for key components that support language and literacy: Playing, Writing, and Reading. When children Play and Write and Read, they build skills today that will empower them for success tomorrow.



Language leads to success!



Board of Directors

Kara Murphy Gregory, PhD Founder and Executive Director of PoWeR! Book Bags

Kara Murphy Gregory serves on the Advisory board for Front Street Writers at the TBAISD Career-Tech Center and on the School Advisory Committee for St. Mary School of Lake Leelanau. She is also a member of the Everybody Reads Think Tank.

Kara received her doctorate from Michigan State University in Family and Child Ecology with an emphasis on Child Development in the areas of social-emotional development, literacy, play, and early childhood education. She received a MA from Eastern Michigan University in Early Childhood Education and a BS from Central Michigan in Child Development and Education. Kara has co-authored multiple editions of two text books: Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning and Scaffolding Emergent Literacy. She created a training program for the state of Michigan on early literacy entitled Playful Literacy and You! (PLaY!) in the early 2000s that is still being used today.

Kara taught as an adjunct Assistant Professor for Michigan State University, teaching courses in early childhood education, play, parenting, and guiding children's social development. She has worked privately as an Early Childhood and Early Literacy Consultant. Her teaching experiences in infant-toddler, preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade classrooms continue to inform her work. Her best experience, however, comes from living her profession daily with her husband and six children.



Teresa Scollon, Vice-President

Teresa Scollon is an author and educator with significant experience in organization development. Currently she teaches writing at the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District Career-Tech Center and Northwestern Michigan College and consults to area nonprofits through the NorthSky Nonprofit Network. She is the founder of a writing workshop for area veterans at NMC and a member and past board president of the Michigan Writers Collective. She is a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, alumna and former writer-in-residence at Interlochen Arts Academy, and the author of a poetry collection.

Teresa previously served as the Diversity Director for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and as a volunteer for Chicago's Business Volunteers for the Arts.

She has an MBA from the University of Michigan and an MFA from the University of Southern Maine.



Leslie McInerney, Treasurer

Leslie is an educator with 28 years of teaching experience in Early Childhood. She most recently taught kindergarten for fifteen years. Previous to that she owned a preschool where she also served as the director and one of the teachers. She has also worked with children in other grade levels as a tutor and teacher.

Leslie received her BS in Education from Central Michigan University with a major in Child Development and minor in Reading.

Leslie lives in Saginaw, MI with her husband. She has two sons.

Karla Gerds, Secretary

Karla is a legal assistant at the public interest law firm, Olson, Bzdok & Howard. Karla has a BA in History and a Post Baccalaureate Paralegal Certificate from Oakland University.

Karla brings her lifelong passion for reading and her legal experience to the PoWeR! Book Bags board.

Karla and her husband Jim moved to Traverse City in 2014 with their four children.



Programs

Pantry
Project

Texas Relief
Project

Summer
Camp
& School

Summer
Power
Days

We currently serve children at 14 pantry and assistance sites throughout Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Wexford, Benzie, Mason, and Oceana Counties:

- Salvation Army, Traverse City
- Grace Episcopal Food Pantry, Traverse City
- Immaculate Conception Food Pantry, Traverse City
- HELP Link, Traverse City
- The Goodwill Inn, Traverse City
- Leelanau Christian Neighbors Food Pantry, Lake Leelanau
- Empire Food Pantry (Community Meals), Empire
- Tabernacle Food Pantry, Buckley
- Fresh Winds Food Pantry, Honor
- Salvation Army, Ludington
- Catholic Charities, Ludington
- HELP Ministries, Ludington
- Oceana's Home Partnership, Hart
- COVE (Communities Overcoming Violent Encounters), Ludington



THE PANTRY PROJECT

Children select a book bag from the bag tree. The book bag contains a bookmark two create-your-own-story writing books, a box of crayons, a welcome card, and a puppet.

The children also select a few books from the nearby bookshelf. At their next visit, they bring their book bags back and select more books to read and books to write (and crayons if desired)!

This program provides an on- going supply of literacy materials.

THE TEXAS RELIEF PROJECT

The second week of October, one of our volunteers delivered 2,200 cinch sacks containing two books, two create-your-own-storybooks, a box of 24 crayons, a bookmark, and a puppet to three pre-K-5 schools in Texas for children impacted by Hurricane Harvey.

Donations came from across the community and volunteers from many walks of life have helped make this happen in a very short amount of time.



SUMMER CAMP & SUMMER SCHOOL PROJECT



In the summer of 2016 and 2017, Power Book Bags provided literacy cinch sacks and weekly book and writing materials to children at the Salvation Army Summer Camp in Traverse City.

In 2017 we added the Migrant Summer School community and provided filled backpacks and weekly book and writing supplies for the entire summer to the Suttons Bay and Frankfort schools.

Children were enthusiastic about weekly books in the summer!

SUMMER PoWeR! DAYS



We have a fifth program in the works to target children in need with books before each school break.

In partnership with FivetoONE, Traverse Area District Library, and Suttons Bay-Bingham Library (and supported by a Good Works Grant from Rotary Charities of Traverse City), Power Book Bags offered a 2017 summer program at two local parks, one day a week for six consecutive weeks.

We gave away cinch sacks filled with writing materials and books that children selected. We also read with children, played literacy games, and helped kids write stories. In total, 202 children attended. We gave away over 900 books!



thank you to our

BOOK SUPPLIERS

Blue Vase Book Exchange
Scholastic Community Partnership:FACE
First Books Foundation Partner



Financial Statement

PoWeR! Book Bags | Annual Report 2017

Financial Statement for PoWeR! Book Bags January 1, 2017-October 25, 2017

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Individual Contributions	17,998.98
Corporate Match Contributions	2,074.00
Rotary Match Contributions	125.00
Grants	1,450.00
Indirect Public Support (Amazon Smile)	11.08

Total Income	<hr/> 21,659.06
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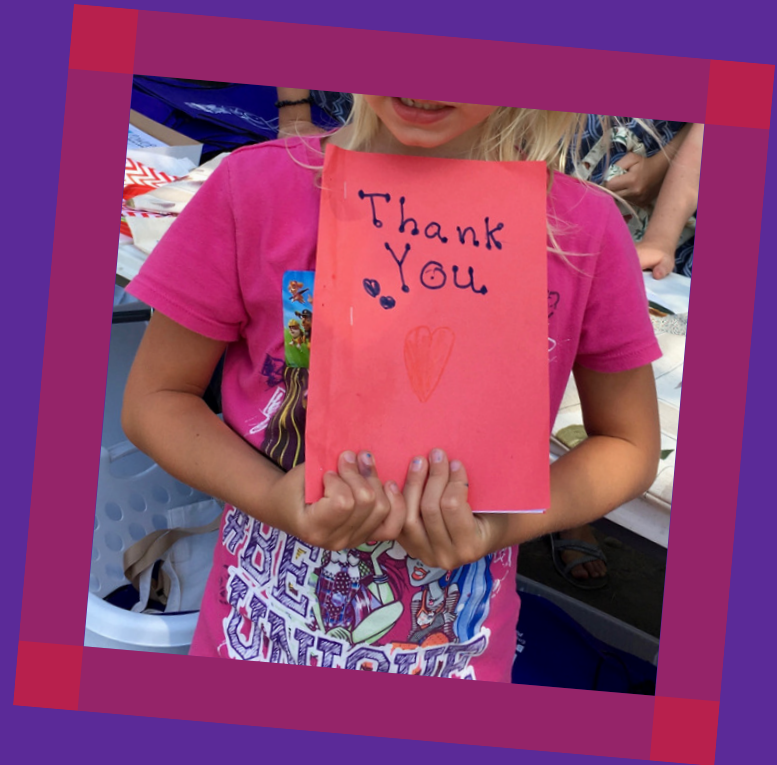
Expense

Business Expenses	242.10
Program Supplies & Operations	17,423.81
Insurance	746.00

Total Expenses	<hr/> 18,412.91
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Net Ordinary Income	<hr/> 3,246.15
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Net Ordinary Income	\$3,246.15
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We extend our
sincerest gratitude to
all that have
contributed to
PoWeR! Book Bags,
through donations of
money, time, and
materials!

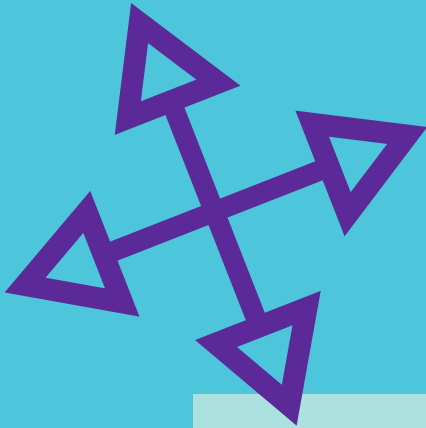
distributions to date



4366

volunteer
hours

GOAL



Year 1: PoWeR! Book Bags was established as a non-profit 501 c (3) providing services in four local pantries.

Year 2: We are creating systems, identifying resources, and establishing communication to support sustainable growth. We have also expanded from four pantries to 14 sites and growing!

We are moving towards increasing our presence in more sites serving children and families in communities along Lake Michigan to spread the power of literacy.

“The Salvation Army has been a proud partner of Power Book Bags since the beginning. The excitement and smiles on the children’s faces who come with parents for food pantry and other services getting books, a cool handmade bag, a writing booklet, and crayons is priceless. It is wonderful to see children excited to learn and to carefully pick out books that interest them. It inspires their imagination and excitement to read and learn.

Beyond the children, we see parents and grandparents just as thoughtfully picking out books that they can share with their children and grandchildren. Power Book Bags is truly a gift of literacy, adventure, imagination, and a spark for children’s excitement to learn.”



Ruth Blick
Director of Community Resource
Development
The Salvation Army - Traverse City

Thanks for reading!

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