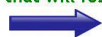


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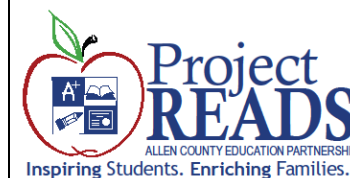
**Project READS Staff**

DeShawn Wert	Executive Director
Deb Dutton	Program Manager
Craig Nix	Projects Manager
J C York	Office Manager
Toma Davis	Program Assistant

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Our vision is that all Allen County children will read at grade level by the completion of third grade.

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Project READS is an organization dedicated to helping K-3 students achieve grade-level reading goals.

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# About EDUCATION

Spring 2017

## When Giving becomes Second Nature

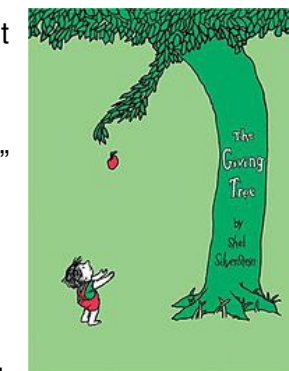
Support for a cause can occur in a variety of ways: by donating money, or offering time, or by providing a positive message to others about the cause.

People often give with some trepidation, though. How much [money, time, energy,] should I give? Is this the cause I want to contribute to? Will my contribution be appreciated and respected? Will my contribution make a difference?

Those are questions each contributor must answer individually. Reaching the point of understanding the importance of giving is a concept often introduced during childhood. It's not surprising that children's books often feature an element of Nature – usually an animal or plant – that takes on human characteristics in order to depict or develop an *adult* concept. A dog or rabbit or even a flower is often better able to convey what it means to share or befriend or forgive in a simpler manner than a human character can. Why?

One argument suggests that plants and animals don't come with as much "baggage" as human characters. Our society expects certain behaviors from humans, whereas trees and elephants can treat the world in a fairly independent manner. An animal that doesn't "look" like me but acts as a caring creature informs me that behavior does not apply to one set of (human) beings moreso than another.

So when a plant takes on human characteristics and becomes a story character, an even more striking message can be delivered. That's the case with "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein.



In the story, Silverstein provides evidence of the impact that giving can have on both the giver and the recipient. The tree selflessly gives of its fruit, shade, wood (the branches) for a house, and wood (the trunk) for a boat. Displaying love as second nature, the tree sacrifices all for the sake of the boy who desires the material things. The bittersweet satisfaction achieved by story's end when the boy – now an old man – accepts the tree's stump as a place of rest serves as a reminder of what's important in living.

While everyone may want to emulate the tree's attributes, more often we act like the boy in the story. Not out of disregard for the tree (which is loved), but more out of distraction. The boy is diverted from the simple qualities inherent in the tree's nature to a greater concern for self. In the end, one hopes that the boy more fully realizes the bond created when giving becomes second nature.

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### Executive Director's Message

Four months already at Project READS! What a wonderful ride it's been so far. A friend recently asked me: "Why would you drive over an hour each way from your home to work as Project READS director for a part time job?" My answer is simply this: "I believe."

- ◇ I believe that partnerships with like-minded organizations can lead to amazing accomplishments.
- ◇ I believe that an education, especially dedicated on reading, changes the trajectory of a child's life
- ◇ I believe in communities that define and model compassion for children to follow later in life.
- ◇ I believe that we are created to develop something special in ourselves and to give it to others.
- ◇ I believe that a caring mentor can make a difference in a child's life.
- ◇ I believe that aligned actions can create momentum that cannot be restrained.
- ◇ I believe in the mission of Project READS.

We have some exciting shifts in programming that include aligning our work more closely with our partners: Allen County Public Schools, Timothy L Johnson Academy, Bridge of Grace Ministries, McMillen Park Community Center, and Queen of Angels Catholic School. We are also looking for other opportunities to share Project READS with other community organizations, especially area universities. I hope you'll join me, the staff, and the volunteers at Project READS in positively impacting young readers throughout Allen County.



*DeShawn Wert*

To those who contributed financial support for Project READS at the agency's 25th Anniversary Dinner on November 3, 2016, we acknowledge your gifts and extend our thanks.

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### Focus on One Loyal Supporter



In addition to being an anchor in the Woodburn community, BF Goodrich has been a generous supporter of Project READS since 1994. The company has certainly shown where the rubber meets the road through its contributions totaling over \$34,000 during that time.

BF Goodrich goes beyond helping Project READS, too. The company has made several donations to the Woodburn Community Association, a non-profit organization responsible for the Woodburn Summerfest. Not so surprisingly, Goodrich also annually donates tires for the Woodburn police department fleet of vehicles.

The plant employs approximately 3,000 people in and around Allen County, and so has a stake in the area's continued growth. That growth depends largely on a dynamic labor force, a labor force created through close attention given to literacy skill development in young learners.

### SAVE THE DATE

In recognition of the hard work and dedication supplied by Project READS volunteers this year, a special celebration will occur on **May 18** beginning at 4:30 p.m.. The event will offer volunteers (and guest) an opportunity to share their experiences with students during this past program year.

The event will be held at The Summit—1025 W. Rudisill Boulevard.

We wish to acknowledge these individuals, corporations, and foundations who have provided their generous financial support to the Allen County Education Partnership from August 1, 2016—December 31, 2016.

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