

Annual Report

2025





A Letter From Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As I reflect on my 18th year with Book'em, I am filled with gratitude for all of you who show up — year after year — to ensure Nashville's children have access to books and the joy of reading.

In 2025, we distributed 127,587 books to children across our programs. Behind each of these books is a story — not just the one printed on the pages, but the story of how that book made its way into a child's hands. It's the story of you — donors who gave generously, volunteers who sorted and delivered with care, schools and partner organizations who opened doors, and families who brought their children to our Book Bus with excitement in their eyes.

The impact we see across all our unique programs tells the same story: we're creating positive experiences and lasting memories of reading and books for young people who need them most. Whether it's the wonder on a child's face stepping onto the Book Bus for the first time, a student in our Reading Is Fundamental program discovering how deeply their reading volunteer cares, or a family beginning a home library — these moments matter.

What makes me especially proud is how effectively and efficiently we serve these children. We're bringing books directly to kids who couldn't otherwise afford them, creating meaningful reading experiences, and doing it all for less than the cost of a book in a traditional retail space. That's the power of this community working together.

As you read this report, you'll see the incredible work of our team, volunteers, and partners. You'll see impact. But more than numbers, I hope you'll feel the heart of what we do.

There is so much more ahead. More children to reach, more neighborhoods to connect with, more memories to create. And I couldn't be more excited about the future we're building together.

Thank you for being part of something truly meaningful. Thank you for believing that every child deserves the magic of books.

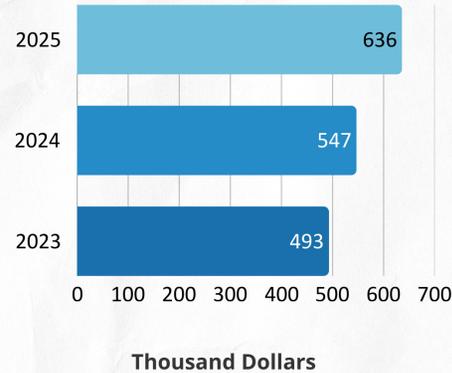
With gratitude,

Melissa Spradlin
Executive Director



2025 Book'em Highlights

Dollars Raised



Book Impact

Books Distributed by Book'em:	127,587
Books Donated to Book'em:	66,844
Books Purchased by Book'em:	56,345
Average Cost Per Book Purchased by Book'em:	\$2.52

Donor Support

Number of Gifts



New Donors

2025: 637 donors
2024: 242 donors

Books for Nashville's Kids (BFNK) Book Room Expansion



2025 marked our strongest year yet — raising more funds, welcoming hundreds of new donors, and expanding access to books for Davidson County's children.



Book'em in the Community



Books for Nashville's Kids

Celina Cunningham, Program Manager for Books for Nashville's Kids, led a year of growth and innovation. **Books for Nashville's Kids helped youth ages 0-18 build home libraries, encouraged reading, and supported academic success** — all thanks to volunteers, donors, and partners.

Program Impact

- 84,753 Books Distributed
- 57,865 Books Donated
- 68 Book Drives
- 173 Partner Agencies
- 92 Organizational Donors
- 31 Volunteer Groups

"The way our community shows up to both donate and request books for Nashville's youth always moves me. We take great care in ensuring the books we distribute empower children and foster their growth as readers."



— **Celina Cunningham**
Book Programs Manager

"I really like the people and believe in the mission of this organization. You feel you can and do make a difference. My elementary school was visited by Book'em when I was a kid, so I know first hand the difference that they made for me and continue to make for kids today."

— **Alan Najera**
Top Volunteer in 2025



Partner Spotlights

Habitat for Humanity

Through a partnership with **Habitat for Humanity of Greater Nashville**, Book'em provides **personalized book bundles to children** at home dedications, helping families begin building home libraries.



"The books provided by Book'em have been so meaningful to our homeowners and their families. They truly help make a new house feel like home, and we are incredibly grateful for your continued support."

— **Jullianna Christy**
Event Specialist for Habitat for Humanity of Greater Nashville

HERO

Books for Nashville's Kids collaborates each year with the Metro Nashville Public Schools' (MNPS) **Homeless Education Resource Office (HERO)** for Warm Reads, Warm Hearts — an initiative that **gifts two books to each MNPS student identified as experiencing housing insecurity before the winter holidays.**



4,815 Books Distributed

"One of my favorite projects of the year! I met a woman today who is on the receiving end for students at the school level and she lit up when she saw [the books] in the hallway ready to go out."

— **Jami Oakley**
Volunteer and Community Partnerships for MNPS HERO





Book'em in Schools



Reading is Fundamental

Caroline Lewis leads the RIF program, coordinating more than 300 volunteers and working closely with school administrators, literacy liaisons, teachers, and students to **ensure meaningful, consistent reading experiences for children across Nashville.**

16 Schools | 300 Classrooms
6,750 Students | 290 Volunteers
898 Classroom Visits

"It's an absolute joy to work alongside incredible volunteers to provide books and reading experiences to MNPS students. Good stories can be life changing, and I'm thankful for teachers and schools who welcome us into their classrooms to share that magic."

— **Caroline Lewis**
Reading Programs Manager



A special recognition is given to Stanley Frank, whose 35+ years of dedicated volunteer service with Book'em exemplifies the long-term commitment and community spirit that sustains the RIF program.

"I keep reading for RIF because I enjoy seeing the kids' delightful, eager to learn faces."

— **Stanley Frank**
35+ year RIF Volunteer

Ready For Reading

Ready for Reading places trained volunteers in local early learning centers to read with preschoolers on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Volunteers serve as reading role models, sharing books one-on-one, in small groups, or with entire classrooms, helping children build early literacy skills and a love of reading.



15 Classrooms Served
11 Volunteer Readers



Read Me Day

Read Me Day is an annual celebration of literacy hosted at Title I elementary schools to highlight the importance of books and reading, create a memorable literacy experience for children, and provide community-wide support for local schools and students. Read Me Day events are organized in partnership with Metro Nashville Public Schools.



2,500
Books

Distributed
To Students

1,171
Students
Reached

Read Me Day 2025 brought community volunteers to Cane Ridge Elementary School in Antioch and Bellshire Elementary School in North Nashville to celebrate reading.

Volunteers read with students and ensured that **every child went home with books of their own** — reinforcing the **importance of literacy and creating meaningful reading moments.**

130+
Volunteer
Readers

57
Classrooms



Book'em on the Road

The Book Bus

Launched in **April 2024**, the Book Bus program brings free books directly to schools and community events, creating joyful, memorable reading experiences for children across Nashville. Since its launch, the Book Bus has visited **123 events**.



The Book Bus Program partnered with over 20 new schools and groups in 2025.



8,119 Books Donated to the bus



"The experience of sharing my love of reading with others is the most rewarding part of this work. Matching the right book with a child's interests is so much fun."

— **Taylor Pappas**
Book Bus Assistant



"The bus program has been one of the true joys in my life...seeing the students' reactions as they exit the bus is incredibly inspirational."

— **Chris Sunday**
Book Bus Coordinator



12,824 Books Distributed



The Book Bus Experience

When the Book Bus visits, students are excited to climb aboard and discover books they love — from princesses and superheroes to series like *Dog Man* and *Pete the Cat*. It's tough to pick just one or two to take home.



Book Drives and Special Events

- Partners like the **Nashville Zoo** and the **Tennessee Titans** held **11 book drives** in 2025 to help stock the bus.
- For the **100th event**, the Book Bus teamed up with **Young Lives Matter** to give books and toys to expectant mothers and their families.
- Holy Family Catholic Church** donated over **5,000 books**.



Sponsors and Funding Support

The Book Bus was created in partnership with **Parnassus Books, HCA Healthcare Foundation, Frist Foundation, Nashville Predators Foundation, Joe C. Davis Foundation, and the Phoenix Club of Nashville.**

We also thank **Delta Dental of Tennessee** and the **Governor's Early Literacy Foundation** for their continued support.

Major Book Giveaways

- Adventure Science Touch-a-Truck **405 books**
- Juneteenth Festival **462 books**
- Southeast Community Day **279 books**
- Nashville Sounds Spooktacular **280 books**

Special Events & Appeals

Mother's & Father's Day

These gifts celebrated the people who made us readers — and help create the next generation of book lovers.



Book'em Breakfast

presented by



- ★ Celebrating 36 years of Book'em
- ★ Raised \$130,000+
- ★ Took place at a new, larger venue — 14TENN

Andrew Maraniss

Honoring Literacy Leaders

Junior League of Nashville



Giving Tuesday

Ann Patchett, author and owner of Parnassus Books, offered a **\$20,000 matching challenge**, helping raise **\$41,875** for Book'em in honor of Giving Tuesday and her 62nd birthday.



Get Involved

Give the Gift of Reading

Volunteer at Book'em:

bookem-kids.org/volunteer/

Host a Book Drive:

bookem-kids.org/give-books/

Make A Gift:

bookem-kids.org/donate/

Text BOOKEM to 44321



Scan QR code for more information





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