



BOOK DRIVE TOOL KIT

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

TO RUN A BOOK DRIVE

to benefit children served through our

Read at Home Initiative

The Books for Kids Read at Home Initiative is a partnership between Read to Grow (www.readtogrow.org) and the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County (www.unitedwaycfc.org) which serves the following towns:

Bridgeport
Darien
Easton
Fairfield
Monroe
New Canaan
Norwalk
Stratford
Trumbull
Westport
Weston
Wilton

Read to Grow Book Drive Tool Kit

How to Organize & Run a Book Drive

Each time someone runs a book drive in a school, business, community, place of worship, or other similar venue, s/he helps us reach more children with the gift of books and the promise of literacy. We appreciate our book drive volunteers; many of the 100,000 books we expect to distribute this year have come to us from book drives.

To help you get started, we have put together this book drive starter kit, full of tips, tools, website links and other resources. Please contact Myra Healy mhealy@readtogrow.org or (203-488-6800) with your plans and any questions you may have. Knowing your plans will help us with our record keeping.

Step 1: Getting Organized

Here's a suggested list to start with:

1. Set up a committee of volunteers to assist in the book drive.
2. Determine when and where to hold the book drive.
3. Determine what type (and for what age group) of books will be collected. Remember, we collect books for children in need from birth to 8th grade.
4. Determine the length of the book drive.
5. Promote the book drive.
6. Clean up after the book drive.
7. Deliver the books to Read to Grow.

Step 2: Setting Up a Committee of Volunteers

The best way to form your committee is to start talking to school mates, co-workers, friends, family and neighbors to generate interest. Contact your school principal, school and community librarians, scout troop leaders or religious leaders to ask for their support and participation. Remember that there is strength in numbers!

Step 3: Where and When to Hold Your Book Drive

After you have formed your committee of volunteers, the next step is to determine when and where to hold your book drive.

Where to Hold Your Book Drive

Schools

If you decide to hold your book drive in a school, local schools — especially elementary schools — are among the most important organizing hubs for book drives and other literacy promotion events. Principals, teachers and media specialists usually support these kinds of events and will often organize a book drive in their classroom or institution. Be sure to obtain permission within the school, through the principal or director, before you proceed with the book drive. You may want to request, or print out, copies of the Read to Grow brochure to share information with others.

Organizing a book drive in an elementary school is a good way to reach the community because young students will often involve their parents and siblings. It is also a great way for middle and high school students to fulfill community service requirements. Consider providing an incentive for the class that collects the most books, or keeping a graph in the school lobby of how many books are collected by each class and the school as a whole. Remember it is a group effort.

Your school may also want to consider creating a Read to Grow Club. Please contact us if you would like a free copy of *A Guide for Students: How to Successfully Start and Run a Read to Grow Club*.

Businesses and Service Organizations

Many companies and service groups such as scouts, civic clubs and men's and women's clubs choose to collect books for Read to Grow to support families and schools in their area. Running a book drive can be a great way for a corporations or business to fulfill a mission to give back to the community in which they are located. To publicize, publish an announcement in your group's newsletter or calendar; send an email blast. Call Read to Grow for posters and brochures; print out information from our website. Read to Grow can also supply boxes as needed.

Religious Organizations/Places of Worship

Churches and synagogues are great places to hold book drives. Religious school classes or individual students may want to consider running a book drive for a confirmation, community service or mitzvah project. Ask religious leaders to assist in promoting your book drive and the importance of literacy to their members. Publish an announcement in the organization's newsletter or calendar. Make flyers and Read to Grow brochures available to the congregation.

When to Run Your Book Drive

Book drives can be held any time during the year. Consider holding a drive in conjunction with other reading or literacy events in your local school or library, many of which participate in the following annual events:

- **Banned Books Week (September)**, www.ala.org
- **Teen Read Week (October)**, www.ala.org
- **National Family Literacy Day (November)**, sponsored by National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), www.famlit.org
- **Read Across America Day (March)**, www.nea.org/readacross/index.html. Each year, the National Education Association sponsors this event in honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday. This website also offers an on-line tool kit full of ideas, activities, resources and literacy websites.
- **National Library Week (April)** www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/nlw/NLW.htm. Each April, National Library Week is held all over the country. Here is another website with more tools and tips to host your event.
- **TV Turn-Off Week (April)**, www.tvturnoff.org. Why turnoff the TV? Television cuts into family time, harms our children's ability to read and succeed in school, and contributes to unhealthy lifestyles and obesity. Check out TV-Turnoff Network website for more on the impact of television and our children.
- **Week of the Young Child (April)**, www.naeyc.org
- **Children's Book Week (May)**, www.cbcbooks.org
- **Reading is Fun Week (May)**, www.rif.org
- **Get Caught Reading Week (May)**, www.getcaughtreading.org
- **Scholastic Book Fairs**, www.scholastic.com. This website has a wealth of suggestions and ideas to assist you in preparing for your book drive.

Step 4: Determine How Long to Run the Book Drive

Most book drives run from two weeks to a month or two. Donors need time to receive the information, go through their personal libraries and get the books to the collection site. However, there is no set length of time a book drive must run. Work with your committee if you have one, and with the venue you have chosen, to determine what's best for your book drive.

Step 5: Setting Up Your Collection Site

Boxes or bins for book collection should be placed where they will be most visible, such as in an entryway or lobby, or as an alternatives, in offices or individual classrooms. Boxes should be strong enough to hold a large number of books; a plastic storage bin (18 gallon) works quite well. Books can be transferred into smaller boxes (such as banker or computer paper boxes) once the bin is full. Boxes with cut-out handles work best. It is a good idea to have one person be responsible for checking the collection bin periodically during the book drive. If needed, Read to Grow can provide boxes.

Posters advertising the book drive should be placed by the book collection bin, and in prominent areas around the venue. Posters can be requested from Read to Grow or designed by students. Remember to include the start and end dates of the collection, the site(s) of the collection, the name of a contact person at the venue and the Read to Grow phone number and web site for anyone wanting more information.

We also have brochures available that can be placed near the collection box(es). Work with your committee to determine the best way to distribute flyers, hang posters, advertise in your organization's newsletter and/or local newspapers.

Note: If you wish to submit a press release to the local newspaper to publicize your book drive, please contact Read to Grow first; it is our policy to review all press releases before they are sent to the media. You may email Cindy Gerstl, Communications Coordinator, at cgerstl@readtogrow.org and forward your release to her in either an attached word document or in the body of the email.

Step 6: Promoting Your Book Drive

Here are some helpful hints regarding publicity:

1. *Write a press release:* Include who, what, when, where, how and why. This should not exceed 400 words and should be sent out in plain text via email. Some papers prefer the information to be in the body of an email; others want attachments. For information, call the individual papers, or you may call Cindy Gerstl at Read to Grow. The Connecticut State Register (the Blue Book) has a full listing of all media in Connecticut, their email addresses, phone/fax numbers and often their publishing deadlines. Don't forget to place your information in your school, church or business newsletter. Again, remember to send your press release to Cindy at Read to Grow for review before submitting it to any paper. We'd appreciate your sending us a copy for our files of any news releases or articles that get printed.

2. *Make follow-up phone calls:* Follow up with a phone call once you have emailed your press release or newsletter piece to ensure it has been received. Call no later than a week in advance of the book drive. Refer the reporter or editor to the Read to Grow website at www.readtogrow.org for more information, or suggest that they call Read to Grow at (203) 488-6800. Lastly, make sure you have given your name and phone number in case of any additional questions.

3. *Take photos:* Newspapers love photos, especially shots of children. A good photo can be used to publicize an upcoming event, or to recognize a successfully completed one, and can often help get your information printed. We suggest that you stage your shots, make sure they're good quality (300 dpi is best), and email them in a jpeg format. We encourage you to send photos to Read to Grow as well. We use them in our printed materials (newsletters, annual reports, brochures) and press releases to raise awareness, to generate interest and to thank groups for organizing book drives and other benefits that support our programs. Please sign and return to us by mail or fax a release of information for each person photographed (parents must sign for minor children); you can download the form from our website.

Step 7: Once the Book Drive is Over

Though it is not necessary, counting the books is extremely helpful to us. If your book drive involves students, they are usually excited to discover how many books they have collected. Books should be packed in manageable boxes or sturdy bags as noted above and delivered to the Read to Grow office during office hours, Monday through Thursday, 9:30 am – 4:30 pm. We are closed to deliveries on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Please contact the Read to Grow office ahead to schedule a time and day that is convenient. If you are unable to deliver the books, we can arrange to pick them up. Remember to remove posters, etc. from walls once the book drive is finished.

Thank you for your support.



United Way
of Coastal Fairfield County

Book Drive!

Books and more books ... We need more books. We are conducting a book drive to collect new or gently used children's books (for infants and children through 8th grade) Connecticut children served by the Books for Kids Early Literacy Initiative, a partnership between the United Way of Coastal Fairfield County and Read to Grow, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting early literacy.

Just bring us your new and gently used books and drop them off at our book drive collection box as noted below. Read to Grow will take care of the rest. Through Read to Grow's and United Way's partnership, the books will be distributed to children and families through pediatric primary care centers, childcare centers, schools and other programs serving communities in need.

Books should be for infants and children through 8th grade and be in good condition, without torn pages or writing in them. Please — no magazines, textbooks, outdated nonfiction, encyclopedia sets or coloring books.

When: _____

Where: _____

Contact: _____

Find out more about Read to Grow at www.readtogrow.org or contact Myra Healy at mhealy@readtogrow.org or 203.488.6800.

Thank you for supporting this important literacy initiative!

Books change lives. Help us change a life.