



Read Aloud News & Notes

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Turning TV off turns families ‘on’ to reading

How one RAP family bonded through less TV and more reading!

When she first heard about TTTT (TV Turnoff Through Thursday), Alestra Menendez was concerned about her family’s ability “to unplug.” But Alestra, a mom who attended RAP at Kilohana Elementary School on Molokai, persevered – she made TTTT a household policy with “no ifs, ands, or buts” about it.

“I knew my children were not completely in favor of having this ‘privilege’ taken away,” Alestra says. But, “as time went on, they thought less and less about what they weren’t watching.”

So what happened when the TV was turned off?

“We are doing more as a family,” Alestra reported. Instead of staring at the television, she and her family read together while they wait in a parked car, at the table, or in the morning before they start the day.

Reading has become more than a transition to bedtime, Alestra says. Now, it is a family activity that everyone enjoys, and its effects are extensive.

“We allude to the books we share together throughout the day,” she explains. “My daughter might mention something funny that Junie B. Jones did in last night’s reading, or my son might connect some new scientific understanding to preparing dinner.”

Alestra’s experience reflects what TTTT aims to cultivate: family bonding through reading. Many families who attend RAP are skeptical about the practicality of turning the TV off through Thursday, but those who stick to it, like Alestra’s family, reap invaluable rewards.

TTTT may be hard at first, but it is not impossible. And in the end, families may share Alestra’s experience: “We snuggle up and take turns reading and being read to,” she says. “It has truly brought us closer together.”

Did you know...

- *RAP will be at a record ten schools across three islands this Fall?*
- *RAP was once again selected to participate in the Macy’s/RIF Book a Brighter Future Campaign? (see details inside)*
- *RAP has had over 165,000 attendees since the program began?*
- *RAP is returning to Nanaikapono Elementary School for the tenth year in a row?*
- *Read Aloud America will participate in Foodland’s Give Aloha campaign? (see details inside)*

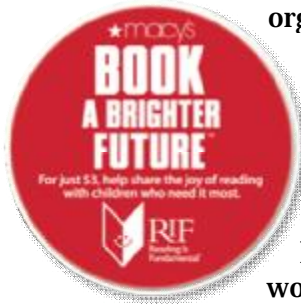
Through the fun of reading and being read-to, Read Aloud America promotes literacy, bonds families, and builds communities of lifetime readers.



Support Children's Literacy at Macy's

Donate to Reading is Fundamental and save at Macy's!

For the fourth year, Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), the nation's oldest and largest children and families' literacy organization, and Macy's have teamed up to Book A Brighter Future™ and help increase awareness and support for children's literacy. Read Aloud America was again selected to participate in the campaign, and we are excited to help inspire support for such a worthy cause!



From July 1–August 31, 2009, give \$3 and receive a \$10 off* coupon for your next purchase of \$50 or more. Macy's will donate 100% of every \$3 to RIF to help provide free books for kids. Because \$1 of every \$3 stays local, this is an opportunity

to help the children in your community! (*Exclusions and restrictions apply. See coupon for details.)

Last year, the Book a Brighter Future™ campaign in Hawaii raised over \$40,000 for RIF. \$13,500 went directly to Read Aloud America to help us expand our RIF programs across the islands in Fall 2009.

Help RIF spread the joy of reading to the children who need

“Give Aloha” at Foodland

Support Read Aloud America while you shop

You now have an opportunity to help our expanding family of readers grow even more. Read Aloud America is participating in Foodland's annual fundraiser, “Give Aloha.”

While shopping at any Foodland or Sack N Save in the month of September, present your maikai card at the register and along with our organization code, 77863, to make a tax-deductible donation. Your donations will go directly to Read Aloud America.

At the end of the month, Foodland will also donate a percentage of the campaign's total earnings to Read Aloud America. You can choose to donate any amount you wish.

Programs like Give Aloha have been helpful to Read Aloud America across the state. We appreciate your continued support! Call our office at 531-1985 for more information.

RAP Fall 2009 Schedule

Please volunteer or be our guest!

OAHU

August Ahrens Elementary: Wednesdays
Aug 26; Sept 9 & 23; Oct 21; Nov 4 & 18.

Ka'a'awa Elementary: Tuesdays
Sept 1, 15, & 29; Oct 13 & 27; Nov 10.

Kalihi Uka Elementary: Thursdays
Sept 3 & 17; Oct 1, 15, & 29; Nov 12.

Ka'imiloa Elementary: Tuesdays
Aug 25; Sept 8 & 22; Oct 20; Nov 3 & 17.

Nanaikapono Elementary: Wednesdays
Aug 19; Sept 2, 16, & 30; Oct 14 & 28.

MAUI

Wailuku Elementary: Tuesdays
Sept 1, 15, & 29; Oct 13 & 27; Nov 10.

Kahului Elementary: Wednesdays
Sept 2, 16, & 23; Oct 14 & 28; Nov 18.

Pa'ia Elementary: Thursdays
Sept 3 & 17; Oct 1, 12 (Mon.), & 29; Nov 12.

BIG ISLAND

Konawaena Elementary: Wednesdays
Aug 26; Sept 9 & 23; Oct 21; Nov 4 & 18.

Ho'okena Elementary: Thursdays
Aug 27; Sept 10 & 24; Oct 22; Nov 5 & 19.

How can I help?

Volunteer: RAP needs individuals who are enthusiastic about reading! To volunteer as a reader, please call 531-1985.

Financial Support: Monetary and in-kind donations help RAP expand and reach thousands of people each year. To make a donation, please make checks payable to Read Aloud America, or call 531-1985 to discuss making in-kind donations.



TV “displaces” reading

Research shows TV inhibits reading & quality family

For decades, the TV has been a dominant force in home entertainment, and this force is only increasing. Research is showing that dependence on “screen time” is sucking the life out of quality family time – time that could be spent reading together.

Children are spending more time in front of a screen than ever before. In the article “Television’s impact on reading skills” (*Literacy Today*), a study showed two-thirds of children ages one to six lived in a home where the TV was on at least half the time or more, and one-third lived in households where TVs were left on “always” or “most of the time” – even if no one was watching. The children surveyed were spending far more time in front of a screen than they were reading or being read to, which translated to a disadvantage in the classroom. In the same study, five and six-year-olds living in homes where the TV was constantly on were significantly less likely to begin reading independently.

Some literacy experts use the term “displacement” to explain why children aren’t reading as much as they could be. The idea is that time in front of the TV or computer is “displacing” or taking away from the time families could be reading together. Furthermore, as Marie Winn discusses in *The Plug-in Drug*, time spent in front of the TV perpetuates children’s dependency, leaving them passively absorbing sounds and images, instead of actively processing words and ideas or imagining their own fantasy worlds.

But how possible is it to avoid or even limit “screen time” in this day and age? Just ask Karen and Mark Springen, whose story was published in *Newsweek*. They decided to raise their two children with no TV – not on weekends, and not even when at a friend’s house. Despite the occasional awkward moment when friends talk about their favorite shows, their children are happy living without TV. Karen says without TV, her daughters are “doing cartwheels, listening to stories and asking such interesting questions such as ‘how old is God?’ and ‘what makes my rubber duck float?’”

Banishing the TV – or limiting it in a structure like TTTT (see pg. 1) – is clearly better for both individuals and families. Winn reminds us that “television has a destructive effect upon family life, diminishing its richness and variety.” Therefore, the key thing to remember is that while reasons to spend time in front of a screen may increase, the hours in a day will not, making time spent with the family and a book even more valuable.

Thoughts from the Lt. Governor

Lt. Governor Aiona reflects on reading & family

All across Hawai‘i, parents and children are finding the pages of books a popular place to bond.



*Lt. Governor
James “Duke” Aiona*

Just ask the staff in Honolulu of Read Aloud America, who is fielding an increasing number of requests from Hawai‘i public schools that want to participate.

This interest is from parents of kindergarteners to high school seniors, hoping to mingle quality family time with their children’s intellectual growth.

In my view, it is much easier to build a strong child than to fix a broken adult. And Read Aloud America is about

developing positive values that make children in our state less likely to take drugs, drop out of schools, or end up in prison.

Our administration is so enthusiastic about Read Aloud America that we are supporting it through the

state Department of Human Services. With the help of a four-year, \$3.1 million grant, our commitment is to help extend the reach of this program to 51

elementary and intermediate schools by 2010.

It is a comfort to see parents using books to expose their children to places they dream of

visiting. They are taking them to faraway lands they’re curious about, or even periods in history that interest them.

The greater point here is this: we as parents need to be intentional about building a close connection

with our children; we need to give them a healthy model of what it means to be a parent.

Clearly, reading together as a family is a way to

check in regularly with our children. Newspaper headlines are filled with stories of children who



Volunteer of the Quarter

“Volunteering is a blessing,” says Marilyn Yeager, who has volunteered for RAP for the last five years.



Marilyn Yeager reads aloud at

After visiting the program once, Marilyn was excited to become a regular volunteer reader. She appreciated how RAP reaches not only so many children, but so many parents as well. “When you reach the parents, you reach the children,” she says.

Marilyn has been a regular volunteer at about ten Oahu schools since she started with RAP. But she has always been happily available to substitute

when a sudden vacancy has come up at a school where she is not assigned.

At the programs, it’s not unusual to see children flocking to “Auntie Mar,” excited to hear her read to

books or help pass out supplies in the reading room.

“Kids are my ‘thing,’” she says. Marilyn enjoys connecting with children, and she recognizes that they enjoy – and need to – connect with adults. In fact, she frequently experiences running into kids around town, who remember her from RAP and who want to tell her about the books they’re reading.

“It’s great to know that they’re reading at home,” she says.

A volunteer for many different initiatives and organizations, Marilyn dedicates much of herself and her time to community service. And she never fails to see how other people from countless walks of life do the same – and as she says, more. In her Olelo Community Television show, “Unsung Heroes,” Marilyn celebrates those in our community who are “behind the scenes,” helping to make our community a better place.

For Marilyn, volunteerism isn’t just a hobby, it’s “always a way of life.”

“In volunteering, you get so much more back than what you put in,” she says. “You just can’t measure what you get back.”



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