

Books from Brek

Newsletter:
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Vol. I Issue 7



Visit our website at <http://booksfrombrek.org>

Books from Brek Foundation

The "Books from Brek" Nonprofit was established in March, 2016 to celebrate the life of Brek Thomas Neiswender.

Brek loved turning the pages of his books and having someone read to him. We hope that this foundation can further the love of reading in many young children. Brek's family manage the funding, selecting, and distributing of all books. Our family members take responsibility to order, level, bag, and distribute books. *His life lives on through the smiles and joy of others.*

Our Impact

We have distributed approximately **36,500 books** from 2016 to 2023. We have distributed 3,000 books so far in 2023 and hope to distribute 3,500 more to reach **our goal of 40,000 by December 31.**



Thanks to Our Supporters

We are grateful to you — our donors, supporters, family, and friends— who continue to stand with us in protecting children, supporting families, and strengthening communities as we achieve our mission and vision. This year was filled with successes and challenges that would not have been possible to achieve and navigate without your support.



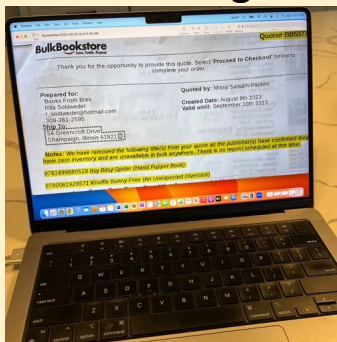
Steps in Our Process

The first step in our process is to prepare for ordering. **We are securing books in both English and Spanish where needed.** We look for great books to read to our young learners and some large print books for those who are sight reading or beginning to sound out letters. We have educators in our family with experience in teaching literacy and recognizing good early learning print materials. We are targeting the early childhood years due to the importance of language development, background knowledge and preparing children for a motivation and love for reading. This can promote success for them in their future school years. **To meet the needs of the different ages in the zero to five age group, we use the criteria of book selection according to age level: ages 0-1; ages 2-3; ages 4-5. Our goal is to choose high interest, fun, picture supported text.**

Leveling

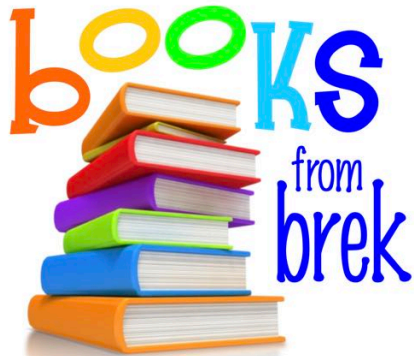


Ordering



The second step in our process is to complete ordering. We generally order four times during the year. We have been fortunate to have some new or gently used books provided by donors. Most of the books distributed are ordered through an amazing book company. **We have been so fortunate to get discounts and even grants from Bulk Bookstore to support our mission and vision. Books are sent directly to the Champaign Public Library. The library graciously provides us with space to receive, store, and bag the books.**

The third step in our process is to bag the books for distribution. We use resources from our donors to purchase Books from Brek bags. **Each bag contains 5 books. Each bag has the Books from Brek logo. Family members help bag the books and package them for delivery.** Donations help us purchase these attractive and useful bags. It is so wonderful to have the space the library provides to receive the books from Bulk Bookstore and to organize them by level for bagging.



Bagging



Distributing



The fourth step in our process is to distribute the books. **We provide books to the library's Mother Goose program and to Crisis Nursery.** Crisis Nursery creates an "Island of Safety" dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect by providing 24-hour emergency care for children and support to strengthen families in crisis. Besides self-shelter for children, ages birth through six, the center provides family support and parenting education to strengthen parenting skills and confidence. Mother Goose on the Loose is an award-winning literacy program designed for children ages birth to 6 years. Children get free books and enjoy special story times when Mother Goose visits area childcare centers.



Enjoying

The fifth step in our process is to share the impact of our service with others. Mother Goose and the Crisis Nursery gift Books from Brek bags to children participating in their programs to take home. Many of these children would otherwise not have books in their homes. **Books from Brek impacts hundreds of children and their families each year.**



The Nursery served 476 children this year through its Safe Children program. When a child visits the Nursery, they receive a book bag to take home with them. Book bags are also distributed through our Strong Families Paving Pathways program. Each of our Family Specialists works with a caseload of families providing support through learning activities, child development, parent-child interaction, and home visiting services.

We are so excited about the partnership Crisis Nursery has with the University of Illinois. Athletes provide incredible time and energy interacting with the center, its programs and its students. **This year, Terrance Shannon Jr. and Justin Harmon helped with our fall distribution.** Terrance was first team all Big Ten (coaches) last season. He left to be part of the NBA draft but decided in late May to return to Illinois for his final year of eligibility. He is from Chicago and is an incredible leader. His leadership will help the Illini this year. Justin is a transfer student from Valley He also is from Chicago. He is a guard and excited to be an Illini! **Their service to the Champaign-Urbana community is greatly appreciated.**



Books from Brek appreciates the engagement and support from the Illini Basketball Team



September 12, 2014
Happy Birthday, Brek!
Brek would have been 9 this year.
He is always in our hearts and minds.



Testimonials from Crisis Nursery

My name is Rachael Graham and I am the Director of Operations at Crisis Nursery. There are many things I love about my job. When I reflect on my favorite moments, it is the little things that mean the most. I want to share two of those moments that gifts from Books from Brek made possible this year.

Moment #1

On nearly 300 occasions this year, a child stayed at Crisis Nursery whose family was experiencing homelessness. Homelessness can take many forms including sleeping on the streets, sleeping in a car, or couch surfing from house to house. The Nursery walks alongside these families by providing emergency childcare overnight so that their kids have a safe place to stay. One night, we had several homeless intakes scheduled so I popped down to see how I could help. That is when I met the sweetest little girl – Kenya. Kenya was timid at first, and a little scared to be in a new place. After bath time and getting snuggled into comfy pajamas, I pulled out Books From Brek. Her eyes lit up! She picked out a book, and together, we sat in a rocking chair exploring the pages. Watching Kenya point to the words on the page, proudly say them aloud, and then look up and smile at me is a moment I will never forget. What made the moment even more special was sharing that those books were now hers! Kenya was beaming from ear to ear and said “Thank you so much – I love these books!!!”

Moment #2

In May, we hosted an Open House in Brek Park. Thirty families attended, and each of them left with Books From Brek. During the Open House, I had the opportunity to talk with families who received the books. They were beyond grateful, as many of them do not have access to books in their homes. They could not wait to take them home and put them to use – some of them even sat on a blanket in the grass and read with their children while at the Nursery! The majority of these families are enrolled in our Paving Pathways program, which focuses on early childhood development, learning, and parent-child interaction. Books From Brek provides a great resource for our families and is an activity that they cherish doing together.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Mission:

Books from Brek collects, processes, and distributes quality new and gently used children’s books **to significantly increase book ownership among at-risk infants, toddlers, and school-age children** throughout the Champaign/Urbana area.

Vision:

Increasing book ownership among at-risk infants, toddlers and school-age children will:

- Improve the reading achievement of children by **increasing their access to print.**
- Recognize having books in the home is **twice as important as the father’s education level.**
- Close the gap in the ratio of books **per child among middle- and low- income families.**
- Increase the knowledge of families in the **relationship between reading success in school and being read to prior to school among all children.**
- Change the fact that millions of children **show up to the first day of kindergarten never having seen a book before in their lives.**

Core Values:

These core values guide our actions and behaviors:

**Equity
Self-Concept
Support
Literacy
Success**

