

Books from Brek

Newsletter:
September 2021

Vol. I Issue 5



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

“Access to books and the encouragement of the habit of reading: these two things are the first and most necessary steps in education and librarians, teachers and parents all over the country know it. It is our children’s right and it is also our best hope and their best hope for the future. - Michael Morpurgo

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 **20,000 books from 2016 to 2020. We have distributed 2,000 books so far in 2021 and hope to reach our five-year goal of 25,000 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.



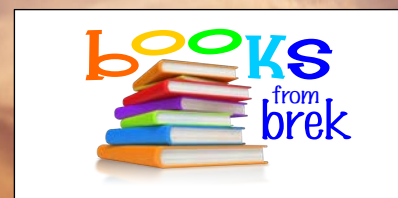
Check our website www.booksfrombrek.org to continue your support and donate to help us grow this program.

Our Mission and Vision

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.



Values We Promote

Equity . . . Self-Concept . . . Support . . . Literacy . . . Success



US Department of Education Early Education Research

Achieving equity in early childhood education (ECE)—making sure all children have the resources to be successful in school—is a fundamental goal of international leaders in education. [NCSL's International Education Study Group](#) found that countries whose students scored the highest on international assessments provide additional and personalized resources to young students who need them the most. These countries also enroll students in preschool early, in many cases for three or more years. In the United States, nearly 20 percent of young students do not attend any preschool—a much higher rate than other high-achieving countries.

The US Department of Education is beginning to measure Kindergarten Readiness- the percent of students beginning Kindergarten who demonstrate readiness.

Here are some of the skills expected of a child entering kindergarten:

- Can identify letters, and knows many of the sounds a letter makes
- Can identify the beginning sound of some words and may recognize some common sight words
- Listens without interrupting
- Can pay attention for a short time period to an adult directed task
- Follows simple directions
- Can wait his turn and expresses feelings with words, as opposed to being physical when angry
- Can write his name and holds a pencil or crayon correctly
- Can complete a 12-piece puzzle
- Can hold and use scissors correctly
- Runs, jumps, skips and manages stairs
- Counts up to 10 objects
- Can play appropriately with other children

When children demonstrate readiness, they begin school with success and a path from grade to grade that leads to good performance and feelings of success. When they do not demonstrate readiness, they begin school with little or no success and a path that leads to difficult growth or improved performance as they are promoted through the grades. Notice how the first five skills are enhanced with access to books and being ready to at home.



Crisis Nursery Center Impact

Being able to distribute Books from Brek bags this past year meant the world to the children and families we serve! When so much seemed to be taken away, Books from Brek continued to give.

The majority of the children we serve do not have books readily available at home. Our partnership with Books from Brek allows us to regularly distribute developmentally and age-appropriate books to at-risk families.

This past year, Crisis Nursery handed out 271 Books from Brek bags to 139 families in Champaign County. Books from Brek provides a critical resource for continued early childhood development and family engagement.



During the holidays, our Family Specialists made surprise visits and dropped off Books from Brek bags with Curtis Orchard Donuts. The smiles on the kiddos faces and the appreciation from parents was priceless.

From all of us at Crisis Nursery, **thank you** to the family, friends, community members, and supporters who make this possible. Books from Brek impacts hundreds of lives each year at Crisis Nursery - you are truly making a difference for the children and families we serve.



Rachael Graham
Director of Development & Communications
Crisis Nursery
1309 W Hill St Urbana, IL 61801
217.337.2731
24-Hour Crisis Line: 217.337.2730

Testimonials

Below are testimonials that provide for us the importance of our program and the impact it is having on young children in the Champaign-Urbana area.

*“Being a parent during these times has been super stressful. I have always wanted to provide a safer and better life for my children than what I experienced when I was young. The challenges of trying to make rent, on top of everything to do with COVID, has increased my stress like crazy. I can’t tell you how helpful it has been to call Crisis Nursery. My kids seem so much happier after they get to experience a different environment for a little while. Knowing that Luria, Max, and Rylan will have everything they need provided for them AND that they have fun, takes away some of that guilt I sometimes feel in asking for help. **Our favorite things about Crisis Nursery are the caring people and the Books from Brek we receive. The books give us an opportunity to learn and grow together as a family.** Crisis Nursery really is making a difference in our community and they are making a difference in my life.”*

- Alaina, a mom of three who utilized Crisis Nursery for the first time this year

Having the option of giving Books from Brek to a family during COVID, was heartwarming on so many levels. It felt like a new gift to many of the kiddos and was something fun to look forward to. Most importantly, it gave the parents books to read with their kiddo - when bonding experiences were potentially limited!

- Dana Kelly, Family Specialist

Giving out Books from Brek (pandemic or not) is my favorite item to give! The families are SO grateful and really appreciate the variety.

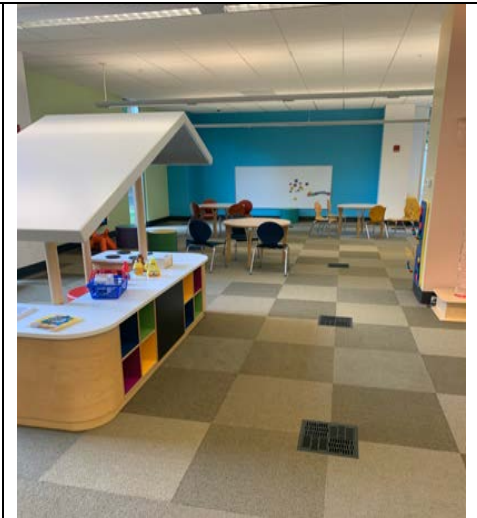
- Taylor Wallis, Family Specialist



Champaign Public Library Mother Goose Program Impact

PlaySpace
dedicated
in memory of
Brek
Neiswender

We are so grateful to the Champaign Public Library for providing space for us to store, collect, and bag our books. The Library has dedicated Play Space within the children's area of the library in memory of Brek.



Happy 7th Birthday, Brek - September 12

Brek's 7th birthday is September 12.

Once again family and friends celebrate Brek by recalling and sharing incredible memories.

Our birthday photo this year reminds us of his sense of adventure and his incredible blue eyes.

