



ROCKY'S READER

A REACH OUT AND READ NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

CLINIC SPOTLIGHT

MILESTONE MOMENTS

ROCKY THE READER

MEET THE TEAM

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

REACH OUT AND READ CHECKLIST



PARTNER TOGETHER TO GROW MISSISSIPPI READERS!

CLINIC SPOTLIGHT

LEADING THE WAY IN LITERACY AND EARLY LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The Mississippi Children's Museum (MCM) is proud to continue advancing early childhood literacy and language development across the state through the Reach Out and Read program. The commitment to helping children thrive through the power of books remains stronger than ever, and the museum is proud to work alongside these dedicated pediatric clinics engaged in this life-changing work.

MCM IS HERE FOR SUPPORT

As part of ongoing efforts, MCM will work diligently to ensure each clinic has the books and resources necessary to implement the Reach Out and Read program effectively. From clinic shelves to patient hands, every book serves as a building block for a child's future.

Distribution processes are being improved to make book management easier and more predictable, ensuring clinics remain well-stocked.

BOOK ORDERING SCHEDULE

To streamline delivery and support, all clinics will now be placed into Group One or Group Two, with scheduled book shipments each year.

- Group One clinics will receive shipments in **July and January**
- Group Two clinics will receive shipments in **September and March**

We recognize that clinic sizes vary, and we may have to work one-on-one with some of you to ensure that you have what you need, but creating these schedules will aid our team and yours in being prepared by remaining on track.



THE KIDZ CARE KLINIC

Staff from the Mississippi Children's Museum delivered more than **2,000** books to the Kidz Care Clinic in Jackson, MS, bringing joy and learning opportunities to local children and families. This meaningful donation was made possible through the generosity of United Way of the Capital Area.

The Kidz Care Clinic is a pediatric clinic that provides care to children from birth to age 18. Dr. Michelle J. Gibson is the owner and pediatrician of the clinic. She and her staff are strong believers of their community.

"This is the first book that some have ever received."

- Michelle J. Gibson, MD, FAAP

The museum's team is dedicated to ensuring that every partnering clinic is stocked with engaging books for children of all ages. By providing access to these resources, MCM supports the families who visit these clinics and reaffirms the commitment to their growth, learning, and well-being.



THE KIDZ CARE KLINIC

5440 Watkins Drive, Suite B
Jackson, MS 39202



SCAN THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT KIDZ CARE KLINIC



MILESTONE MOMENTS WITH UMMC PROVIDERS

EARLY LITERACY

Reading to babies and young children is important for many reasons. There is an abundance of research showing that caregivers reading to children has a positive impact on their brain development, learning, and relationships.



Lauren B. Elliott, MSN, PNP
Children's of Mississippi

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

The language centers in the brain are activated when a child is being read to, which creates stronger communication pathways and leads to enhanced early language and literacy development. Studies show that young children who are frequently read to exhibit higher academic performance later in their school years.

EARLY RELATIONAL HEALTH

Just the simple act of sitting down together to enjoy a story helps build strong nurturing relationships between family members. These shared moments show children crucial bond-building concepts, emphasizing that caregivers are interested in them, care for them, and want to spend time with them.

It's important to recognize that early learning happens when parents read to and interact with their children, rather than by trying to teach babies letters and letter sounds. In fact, focusing too much on teaching letters and sounds before a child is developmentally ready, can have a *negative* impact on their literacy journey, as they may associate reading with frustration and failure.

When families read together, it's about more than the books and stories they are sharing. It's a fun way to learn, grow closer, and show children that they are loved. These day-to-day interactions make a big difference—enabling children to feel safe, seen, and excited to continue learning.



SCAN THE QR CODE FOR REACH OUT AND READ'S MILESTONES EARLY DEVELOPMENT CHART



DEAR VALUED PEDIATRICIANS,

The importance of promoting literacy and the positive impact that access to books can have on the lives of patients and their families is widely recognized. The success of this program relies not only on engagement with families but also on engagement within the broader community.

Building strong relationships with donors, organizations, and philanthropists in each area helps secure the necessary funding to ensure a steady supply of books for young patients. Taking an active role in seeking grants and fostering donor support creates opportunities for continued growth and enrichment within each practice.

The Mississippi Children's Museum offers assistance with presentations to potential donors, exploration of grant opportunities, and support in establishing partnerships. These collaborative efforts ensure that children in care have access to the educational materials needed to thrive.



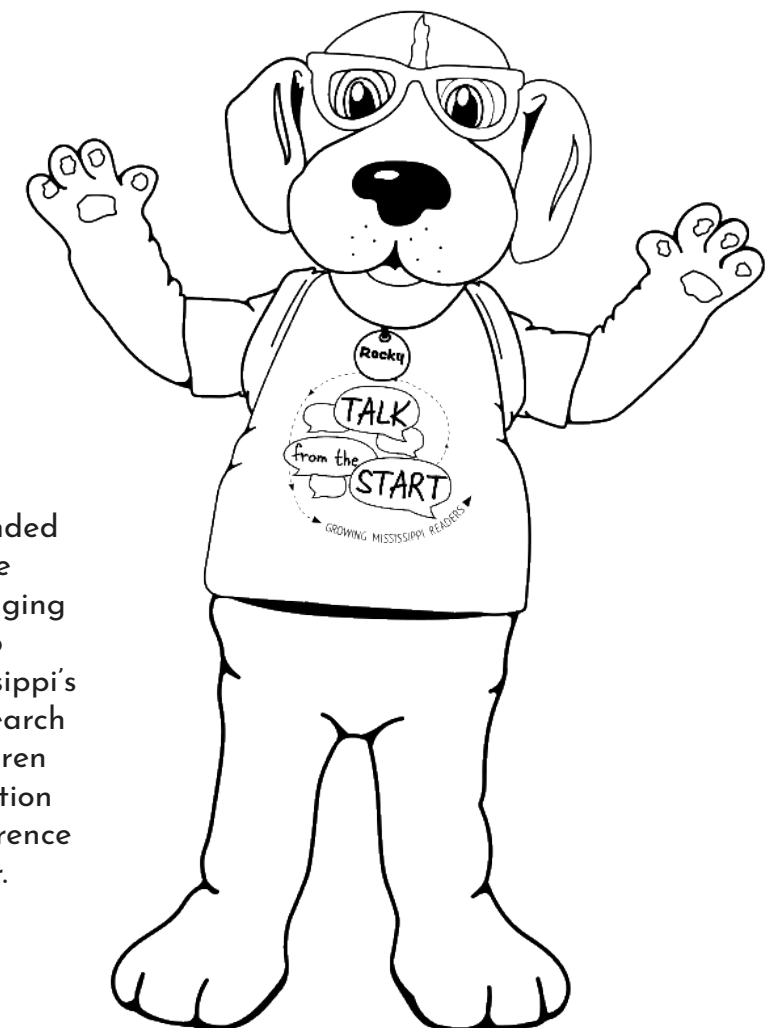
TALK FROM THE START

Young children need to hear about 21,000 words per day for optimal language development.

TALKING from the START is everyone's responsibility!

Have you met our mascot, Rocky the Reader? He keeps some of his favorite books in his backpack.

How will you color Rocky?



Talk from the Start is a statewide campaign funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, created to raise public awareness about the importance of engaging with children through conversation from birth to support early language development for Mississippi's youngest learners. It may sound simple, but research has proven that simply talking to and with children throughout the day gives them a strong foundation for early literacy, which can determine the difference between a good reader and a struggling reader.



MEET THE TEAM!



Aundreus Patterson
aundreus@mcm.ms

Aundreus serves as the Assistant Director of Statewide Outreach for the Mississippi Children's Museum. His roots trace back to Jackson Public Schools and stand as a testament to the transformative power of education and the potential that lies within each student. After graduating from Alabama State University with a bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts, Aundreus went on to Long Island University to complete a master's degree in special education in the lives of urban adolescents. These experiences became the fuel that ignited 10 years of educating generations of young people in Brooklyn New York's underserved communities in the areas of special education, musical theatre, and English language arts. Aundreus' heart for literacy and community led him back to his Mississippi roots and affords him the opportunity to provide resources and support throughout the entire state.



Monique Ealey, ED. D.
monique@mcm.ms

Monique is the Director of Education and Experiences for the Mississippi Children's Museum. She earned her bachelor's degree from Jackson State University, her masters and specialists degrees from Grand Canyon University, and recently completed a doctoral program at Grand Canyon University. Monique has over 25 years of experience in education and community service, also formerly serving as an elementary school teacher. Monique has been conducting professional development for educators and family literacy training with caregivers and children for 8 years. Monique is passionate about child development and connecting families with resources that will aid in both the child and entire family unit thriving.

ROCKY THE READER



ROCKY'S HOUSE

Rocky's House introduces caregivers and children to a cast of characters representing the diverse population of Mississippi. In this exhibit, Rocky and Friends guide guests through three primary methods of language and literacy development: playing, talking, and reading. Adults and children who interact with Rocky's House will learn about these methods and have a chance to put them into practice.

The centerpiece of the Rocky's House traveling exhibit is Rocky's Home. Here, visitors can read a book, ask questions, and put their own stories into motion through puppets. The four featured books in Rocky's backyard are Grow with Me, Play with Me, Talk with Me, and Read with Me. Each of these books are designed to foster the form of language and literacy development mentioned in its title.

Inside these larger-than-life books, children discover a world where they can bring stories to life and explore language in many forms. Each interactive experience is packed with practical tips and insightful guidance, empowering caregivers with simple strategies to support children's literacy at every stage of development.

Rocky's House has found its way into libraries, community centers, schools, and pediatric offices throughout the state of Mississippi, and is available for booking!

ROCKY'S BOOK CLUB

Rocky's Book Club is a fun, interactive read-aloud experience, offered weekly at the Mississippi Children's Museum in both Jackson and Meridian. MCM's expert readers bring stories to life, engaging young imaginations and making every book an adventure. Each session wraps up with a hands-on activity inspired by the story, encouraging creativity and self-expression. In Jackson, guests who attend will receive a paw print sticker that puts them closer to earning an incentive once they've collected them all. Visit either location for this exciting and enriching program.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ROCKY'S BOOK CLUB IN JACKSON



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ROCKY'S BOOK CLUB IN MERIDIAN

Bring Rocky's House or Rocky the Reader to your clinic!

Dear Medical Champion,

I want to express my sincere appreciation for your commitment to Reach Out and Read and your dedication to strengthening families through shared reading. This partnership is possible without your consistent effort and passion.

As we continue to support the Reach Out and Read mission, I'd like to establish regular opportunities for the MCM team and our partnering clinics to meet via Zoom. These meetings aim to identify and address any challenges with the program, while also providing an opportunity to share success stories that can be documented and reported to national Reach Out and Read directors and colleagues.

The national program values input from our partners, and regularly scheduled meetings will ensure this feedback is shared. At your convenience, please email aundreus@mcm.ms to schedule a follow-up meeting about your partnership.

- Sincerely,
Aundreus Patterson
Assistant Director of Statewide Outreach

Reach Out & Read Checklist!

Use this checklist to review the requirements for developing a high quality Reach Out and Read program.



MEDICAL PROVIDERS

- Ensure all medical providers complete the Reach Out and Read Continuing Medical Education (CME) online course.
- Encourage new providers to complete the CME course within three months of joining; include the training in the new hire checklist.
- Identify a medical provider to actively champion the Reach Out and Read Program.



BOOKS

- Determine who selects books for each visit (providers or staff) and ensure onboarding orientation educates them in their role in selection and tracking.
- Create an accessible, organized book storage area by age and language.
- Assign responsibility for ordering and restocking.
- Develop a reliable system to track books distributed (Tip: Place a bookmark or notecard into each book and collect it when the book is given to a family—Store all collected bookmarks together.)



LITERACY-RICH ENVIRONMENT

- Transform waiting and exam rooms to promote literacy and family engagement, including child-size furniture, bookshelves, gently used books, and literacy-themed art or signage.
- Provide information about community resources such as libraries, story-times, and hours; Reach Out and Read staff can assist with library connections as needed.



PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Hold a staff meeting to launch the Reach Out and Read program and ensure all staff understand the program model.
- Engage clinic leadership in program startup and ongoing support and introduce them to Reach Out and Read.
- Establish a system for collecting and submitting biannual progress reports, including books distributed, well-child visits, insurance coverage, race, and languages spoken for patients under 5 years of age.
- Ensure sustainable funding for books, ideally by incorporating costs into the clinic or operational budget. Reach Out and Read staff can assist in funding strategies.
- Appoint a Site Coordinator to manage program implementation, facilitate annual staff meetings, and attend regularly scheduled meetings with Reach Out and Read staff.
- Develop a transition plan for Medical Consultant and Site Coordinator roles and communicate changes to Reach Out and Read staff.