MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

ROCKY'S READER

A REACH OUT AND READ NEWSLETTER

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Reach Out & Read®

Publication Project of The LIFT | *liftms.org*



LETTER FROM DIRECTOR

Monique Ealey, ED. D.

As part of ongoing efforts, MCM works 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.

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

Book Ordering Schedule

GROUP 1 Group One clinics will receive shipments in July and January

GROUP 2 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. Please email Monique Ealey at monique@mcm.ms with any questions or book ordering requests.

Monique Ealey, ED. D.
Director of Education
Mississippi Children's Museum



Don't Leave the Doctor's Office Wondering:

Questions Every Parent Should Ask at Well-Child Visits

Well-child visits are about much more than shots, height, and weight. They are one of the best opportunities to partner with your child's pediatrician to support their physical, emotional, social, and developmental growth. Many parents leave an appointment only to remember a question they meant to ask. Others may feel embarrassed to bring up concerns because they think they're "overreacting" or that everyone else's child is doing the same thing.

Here's the truth: There are no silly questions when it comes to your child's health and development. Pediatricians want to hear your concerns, even the small ones.

Before your next visit, consider asking some of these important questions:

DOCTOR'S OFFICE CHECKLIST

Development & Learning

- ☐ Is my child's development on track for their age?
- ☐ What milestones should I expect before our next visit?
- ☐ Are there any signs that my child may need additional support or evaluation?
- ☐ How can I help prepare my child for preschool or kindergarten?
- ☐ What activities can we do at home to encourage learning?

Language & Reading

- ☐ Is my child hearing and understanding language appropriately?
- ☐ Is my child talking as much as expected for their age?
- ☐ What books do you recommend for this stage?
- ☐ How much should I be reading with my child each day?

Behavior & Emotions

- ☐ Is my child's behavior typical for this age?
- ☐ How can I handle tantrums, big emotions, or challenging behaviors?
- ☐ When should I be concerned about anxiety, sadness, or behavior changes?
- ☐ How can I help my child build confidence and resilience?

Sleep

- ☐ Is my child getting enough sleep?
- ☐ What bedtime routine do you recommend?

Nutrition

- ☐ Is my child growing at a healthy rate?
- ☐ Are they getting enough vitamins and nutrients?
- ☐ How can I encourage healthier eating without creating power struggles?
- ☐ Should my child take vitamins?

Screen Time & Technology

- ☐ How much screen time is appropriate for my child's age?
- ☐ How can I create healthy technology habits for our family?

A Final Reminder:

Write your questions down before the appointment and keep them in your phone or diaper bag. No one knows your child better than you do, and your observations are one of the most valuable tools your pediatrician has. **Your voice matters. Your questions matter.** Together, you and your child's pediatrician are a team working to help your child grow, learn, and thrive.

COMING THIS FALL

ROCKY & FRIENDS BOOK SERIES



Created to support the Mississippi Children's Museum's Talk from the Start campaign, Rocky the Reader and his friends are bringing the importance of early literacy to life through a new children's book series funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Each story highlights a different member of Rocky's friend group and is tailored to a specific reading level based on the main character's age, helping children grow as readers from infancy through early childhood.

The debut titles, *Grow with Me* and *Read with Me*, will be released this fall and distributed to Reach Out and Read clinic partners as part of their next book shipment, extending the campaign's mission of encouraging families to talk, read, and learn together from birth.



Grow with Me

Mateo's Day in the Garden

Grow with Me: Mateo's Day in the Garden introduces readers to Mateo, the youngest of Rocky friends, as he spends a day exploring the sights and sounds of a vibrant garden. Designed for growing infants, this interactive board book encourages caregivers to engage with their child through conversation, observation, and play while reading together. Along the way, families can identify colorful butterflies, count blooming flowers, imitate the buzz of busy bees, and discover the world through Mateo's eyes. These simple, shared experiences help build early language skills and strengthen the bond between caregiver and child.



Read with Me

Learning to Fish with Kareem

Read with Me: Learning to Fish with Kareem follows 8-year-old Kareem, Rocky's best friend, as he spends the day fishing with his father and teaching his friends along the way. Written for older readers who are ready to build confidence with more advanced vocabulary and longer stories, this engaging book combines literacy with a hands-on, outdoor adventure. As Kareem and his friends bait their hooks, cast their lines, and patiently wait for a fish to bite, readers learn the value of perseverance, curiosity, and trying new things. Through teamwork, patience, and the excitement of a day on the water, *Read with Me* reminds readers that learning new skills is an adventure best shared with friends.

W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION®

Purchase your very own copy of our new children's books on-site at the museum beginning this fall!









UMMC HEAR FROM A PROFESSIONAL



Dr. Susan Buttross

"The earliest years of a child's life are some of the most important for growth and development, and that's why I love *Talk from the Start*. It reinforces everything we know about early brain development and the incredible ways children are learning from the very beginning. From birth to age three, children's brains are growing at an extraordinary rate, making this a critical time for learning, language development, and building strong foundations for the future.

This early stage is also why children are able to learn language more easily. During these years, the brain is laying down critical patterns and forming millions of neural connections every second.

Research shows that children who hear a large number of words and regularly participate in conversations—even if they're just babbling—learn to read more easily, develop language more quickly, and tend to do better in school.

Through *Talk from the Start* and other literacy-focused initiatives, the Mississippi Children's Museum works to bring these important experiences directly to families across the state. They make it a priority to travel throughout Mississippi, bringing engaging experiences to communities that support this literacy initiative. In addition, its *Reach Out and Read* partnership with pediatricians across Mississippi has been an incredible program, helping place books into the hands of young families and encouraging parents and caregivers to read to and with their children from birth."

Dr. Susan Buttross

Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician
Professor Emeritus, University of Mississippi Medical Center
District VII Chairperson and Board Member of the American Academy of Pediatrics

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™
Mississippi Chapter

Children's of Mississippi | Center for Advancement of Youth



Every Child Grows at Their Own Pace:

Understanding Developmental Milestones

One of the most exciting parts of watching a child grow is seeing all the new things they learn to do! From a baby's first smile to a school-aged child's growing independence, every new skill is a milestone worth celebrating.

Developmental milestones are behaviors and skills that most children achieve by a certain age. They help parents and pediatricians understand how a child is growing in areas such as physical development, communication, social and emotional development, and more.

It's important to remember that children develop at different rates. Some children may begin talking earlier, while others become physically active first. Small differences are usually normal. However, milestones are helpful because they can identify when a child may benefit from extra support. The earlier a developmental delay is recognized, the sooner families can access resources that can make a significant difference.

AGES 0–2 YEARS

Physical Development

- Holds head up and gains control of body movements
- Rolls over, sits, crawls, stands, and walks
- Begins climbing, running, and kicking a ball
- Uses fingers to pick up small objects
- Begins feeding themselves with utensils

Language & Communication

- Responds to familiar voices and sounds
- Babbles and imitates sounds
- Says first words around 12 months
- Uses simple two-word phrases by age 2
- Follows simple directions

Social & Emotional Development

- Smiles and laughs with caregivers
- Enjoys peek-a-boo and interactive games
- Shows affection to familiar people
- Begins playing alongside other children
- Expresses a wide range of emotions



Thinking & Learning

- Explores with all five senses
- Learns through play and repetition
- Recognizes familiar people and objects
- Begins solving simple problems
- Enjoys looking at books and turning pages

AGES 3–5

Physical Development

- Runs, jumps, hops, and climbs with increasing confidence
- Throws, catches, and kicks a ball with better coordination
- Uses scissors, crayons, and pencils with greater control
- Dresses and undresses with little assistance
- Begins mastering buttons, zippers, and other fine motor tasks

Language & Communication

- Speaks in complete sentences and carries on conversations
- Asks "why," "how," and "what if" questions
- Follows multi-step directions
- Retells familiar stories and describes daily experiences
- Recognizes some letters, sounds, colors, shapes, and numbers

Social & Emotional Development

- Enjoys imaginative and pretend play
- Begins taking turns and sharing with others
- Develops friendships and enjoys cooperative play
- Identifies and talks about a variety of emotions
- Shows increasing independence while still seeking reassurance from trusted adults



Thinking & Learning

- Solves simple puzzles and problems
- Sorts and classifies objects by color, size, or shape
- Counts objects and begins understanding simple math
- Recognizes patterns and sequences
- Uses imagination to create stories, games, and artwork



AGES 6–8

Physical Development

- Improves coordination and balance
- Learns more complex sports and games
- Develops stronger handwriting and fine motor skills
- Becomes more independent with self-care

Social & Emotional Development

- Forms close friendships
- Understands teamwork and cooperation
- Begins developing empathy for others
- Gains confidence through accomplishments
- Learns to manage emotions with support

Thinking & Learning

- Solves more challenging problems
- Understands cause and effect
- Follows multi-step directions
- Begins thinking more logically
- Develops interests and hobbies

Language & Communication

- Reads increasingly complex books
- Expands vocabulary rapidly
- Tells detailed stories
- Understands jokes, humor, and figurative language
- Communicates thoughts and feelings more clearly

CONTACT YOUR CHILD'S PEDIATRICIAN IF YOU NOTICE:

- Loss of skills your child previously mastered
- Difficulty hearing, seeing, or understanding language
- Challenges with movement or coordination
- Limited communication for their age
- Ongoing difficulty interacting with others
- Concerns about learning, behavior, or emotional well-being

Early conversations can lead to early support, and early support can make a lifelong difference!



365 dAyS ofkiNdneSS

This fall, celebrate gratitude at the Mississippi Children's Museum with our seasonal Gratitude Tree! Standing 11 feet tall, the Gratitude Tree is a community display that invites guests of all ages to reflect on and share what they're thankful for. Each leaf adds to a growing expression of thankfulness, celebrating the people, moments, and experiences that bring joy to our lives. Whether you're grateful for your family, the cooler weather, or a day at the Mississippi Children's Museum, write your gratitude on a leaf and add it to the tree. Your message may inspire the next guest to pause, reflect, and celebrate the good around them.

This season, we are showing gratitude to our local partners.

We are grateful for...

- Children's of Mississippi
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- Our Clinic Partners
- Reading with Friends & Family
- Playing Outside
- Reach Out and Read



MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Join us at the museum for

Week of Gratitude

November 23–27, 2026!

scan to learn more !

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