

# fact sheet #8

## for Friends and Foundations

### GETTING INVOLVED WITH LITERACY PROGRAMS

Most studies show that at least 20% of Americans are illiterate. Libraries and Friends of the Library groups can make a difference, especially with infants and toddlers. Studies show conclusively that children who experience a book-rich environment prior to pre-school and kindergarten have a significantly greater chance of success in school and in life. Whether working to prevent illiteracy (working to get books to babies and their parents) or providing remedial help, the following are some steps to help others along the path that means so much to us.

#### DIRECT SERVICE:

1. Participate in local literacy groups as a Trustee or member of an advisory committee.
2. Develop a books for babies program that includes a new book for baby, reading tips for parents, information about the children's materials at the library, and information about the library (that it is free, where it is located, its hours, etc.). United for Libraries makes available for purchase Books for Babies kits all ready to go. Visit [www.ala.org/united](http://www.ala.org/united) for more information or call (800) 545-2433, ext. 2161.
3. Generate financial resources by helping the library and/or literacy groups apply for federal, state, and local funds, and by developing corporate and foundation grants. For more information, see *Getting Grants in Your Community*, a publication available to United for Libraries members in the Friends & Foundation Zone and the Trustee Zone.
4. Donate funds for: a) tutor and student recognition, b) public awareness campaigns, c) social events to foster enthusiasm, d) materials for adult new readers, e) general operations for new or existing programs.
5. Donate equipment or space.
6. Volunteer: a) literacy tutor, b) office help, c) child care, d) transportation for students or tutors.

#### INDIRECT SERVICE:

1. Create a committee within the Friends board to maintain contact with literacy programs. Network with other organizations to ensure a proactive campaign for literacy by the library.

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2. Create or join a citywide council in conjunction with the mayor's office.
3. Educate business, labor, and industry leaders about literacy issues and encourage their contact with literacy providers: a) send letters to business leaders, b) publish a newsletter, c) sponsor an informational conference or luncheon.
4. Compile a resource directory on community literacy programs.
5. Provide programs and speakers for other organizations on the problems of illiteracy and the work of literacy agencies.
6. For more ideas, see *Even More Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends*, available from United for Libraries.

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**United for Libraries**

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