

## Citywide Campaign Brings Reading into Every Child's Day



Campaign motto: "20 minutes, every child, every day."

**M**ore than half of Worcester Public Schools third-graders read below grade level when they finish the year, according to MCAS tests. Third-grade reading proficiency is regarded as the most reliable predictor of future school and career success.

Worcester Public Schools has developed a plan to close this literacy gap. Now, the entire community is joining the schools to meet this challenge. This fall, the Worcester Education Collaborative (WEC) and its partners inaugurated a campaign entitled *Worcester: The City That Reads*. Its goal is to inject 20 minutes of reading into the daily lives of children and families throughout Worcester.

The campaign emphasizes getting books into the hands of all children. "Substantial research indicates that many children lack consistent access to appropriate reading material," says Jennifer Davis Carey, executive director of WEC, a Foundation grantee.

The campaign's October 3 kick off featured activities in schools and libraries that reinforced daily reading.

Describing the widely publicized debut as "only the beginning," Campaign Chair Patricia Eppinger says, "We'll sustain the momentum with monthly programs on themes that appeal to kids, such as holidays and sports events, as well as public outreach."

WEC drew broad backing for the campaign from local businesses and nonprofits, including Edward Street Child Services and the Worcester Historical Museum. The Hanover Insurance Group's community relations consultant, Alexandra Montgomery, worked with the Worcester Public Library for six months as project manager of the campaign roll-out.

Moving reading into neighborhoods and homes, the Worcester Public Library is a key partner in the campaign, hosting proven programs such as "Every Child Ready to Read," which trains parents in reading to toddlers.

"We're taking best practices into the community," says Patricia, a Foundation corporator who regards the Foundation's Education Initiative as another asset in advancing early childhood literacy. "We're all spreading the message: 20 minutes of reading, for every child, every day."

## Distribution Committee Grows, Gains New Chair

This fall, the Foundation's Distribution Committee gained a new chair, board member Brian Chandley, and grew from seven members to nine. The committee will award \$1.5 million this year.

During the Foundation's two annual discretionary grant cycles each of its members—staff and volunteers—spends about 30 hours reading and scoring proposals and then meeting to reach consensus on recommended grants. The committee considers all proposals with care, whether from large, established nonprofits or from small agencies seeking seed grants.

"The process is very rewarding," says Brian, who recalls an innovative project that enlisted barbershops in African American neighborhoods to spread information about prostate cancer risks. "The Committee is very receptive to compelling proposals for new programs that we then watch develop over several years."

## UMass Medical Students Experience Health Care in Developing Countries



*Treating patients at a rural clinic in India, says Dr. Moreira, “I learned there’s more I can do beyond private practice. I’m grateful for my grant and I look forward to again serving overseas.”*

**P**ediatricians Louis E. Fazen III, and N. Lynn Eckhert help fourth-year students at UMass Medical School gain clinical experience in developing countries. Their donor advised fund at Greater Worcester Community Foundation makes yearly grants to the Alliance Charitable Foundation of the Massachusetts Medical Society, which awards International Health Studies grants to medical students.

Grantees have included Helen R. Moreira, MD, now an ophthalmologist practicing at South Shore Hospital and Nielsen Eye Center, in Quincy; and Olga Valdman, MD, director of the Global Health track for the Family Medicine residency at UMass Medical School and a physician at Family Health Center of Worcester.

In 2008, Dr. Valdman used her grant to work with sugarcane workers and their families in the Dominican Republic. She joined a clinical team that traveled by bus to treat workers on plantations. They devised a medical record that patients could bring to clinics and obtain more coordinated care. “I learned a lot about workers’ needs and became their advocate,” says Dr. Valdman. “And since then, I’ve

developed other programs based on my experience with the country’s healthcare system.”

In 2009, Dr. Moreira journeyed with ophthalmologists to remote villages in Chennai, India, where they conducted daylong “eye camps” in impoverished neighborhoods. She helped screen patients and assisted doctors as they performed surgeries. “They provided very efficient care,” says Dr. Moreira, “from operating room procedures to mobile clinics.”

Observing how doctors brought quality care to underserved communities, Dr. Moreira felt better prepared for her residency at Rhode Island Hospital, where she treated many uninsured patients. “Some were receiving eye care for the first time,” says Dr. Moreira.

Gaining a global perspective can transform care at home, says Dr. Fazen. “Immigrants struggle to accommodate our culture. Understanding people in their own environment makes a world of difference.”



*The Worcester Revolution of 1774, a free, daylong festival, featured tours, exhibits, games, music, period crafts, and a march reenactment.*

## Worcester Revolution of 1774 Honors Pivotal Day in Birth of Democracy

**R**alph Waldo Emerson may have immortalized the Concord Minute Men for firing “the shot heard round the world.” But seven months earlier, Worcester was the scene of a lesser-known but pivotal event in the American Revolution.

On September 6, 1774, 4,500 militiamen from Worcester County towns forced British magistrates out of Worcester. They marched through the city, shut down the Crown-controlled courthouse, and, for the first time ever in the American colonies, overthrew British authority.

The *Worcester Revolution of 1774*, the first

major public celebration of this event, was held on September 7, 2014. A Foundation mini-grant was the first investment in the day-long festival, planned by a volunteer committee representing nine Worcester cultural and historic organization. “As the first to back us,” says Michael Fishbein, committee outreach manager, “the Foundation validated what we were trying to do.”

More than simply a look back, the day reflected on the power of people to shape their society. Insisting on their right to a representative government, Worcester’s citizens prevailed without firing a shot.

# African Community Education Program Helps Newcomers Succeed

**F**ounded in 2006, Worcester's African Community Education (ACE) Program helps African refugee and immigrant families achieve success in school and life.

Many immigrants from Africa make Worcester their home. "We are a strong community and we come together to help one another," says ACE co-founder and executive director Kaska Yawo, a linguist born in Liberia. "Worcester is a welcoming city. Its people see the needs of refugee families and support us."

"Our families arrive from war-torn homelands. They struggle to learn English and keep up. At first, drop-out rates were high. Now, most of our students graduate from high school and many attend college."

ACE grew out of a tutoring program run by UMass Medical School students for refugee children from Liberia. "Parents used to dream that their children would complete high school," says ACE co-founder Olga Valdman, MD, who migrated here from Russia at age 15. "ACE students do really well and some now tutor others."

A Foundation grantee, ACE works closely with the Worcester Public Schools. Almost 200 volunteers participate in ACE's classes and tutoring sessions held after school and on Saturday mornings.

Its year-round activities include programs in summer reading, sports, and the arts as well as citizenship and English classes for adults.

Among ACE's outreach workers is Jeanine Haru, a 2014 graduate of Assumption College who is fluent in French, English and her native language, Kirundi. Jeanine joined ACE in 2007, after arriving from Tanzania, and attended ACE throughout high school.

"I was placed in 10th grade but spoke no English," says Jeanine. "At ACE, I studied advanced math and a tutor taught me English. Thanks to ACE, I graduated as an A student and attended the college of my dreams."



*Students from 5th to 12th grade attend ACE classes and tutoring sessions held after school and on Saturday mornings.*

**How do you want to be remembered?** Contact Ann Lisi or Kelly Stimson at 508-755-0980

## Scholarship Honors Beloved Mother and Teacher

**T**he Catherine Burgholzer Memorial Scholarship is for high school graduates from Shrewsbury, where Catherine taught health and adaptive physical education to elementary school students.

Grades and community service count, and so does having a parent afflicted by cancer. "We want to support others who've been through this," says Catherine's daughter Julie.

Julie and her siblings envisioned the scholarship as a living tribute to their mother, who died in May 2011 from cancer. "We're inspired by her legacy," says Casey, Julie's sister. "Our mother was always learning and giving back."

Pooling their talents to raise funds were Julie, a 2012 graduate of Providence College; Casey, a senior at Northeastern University; Paul, a freshman at Catholic University; and their father, Paul, who ran his first Boston Marathon in 2014 to recruit donors.

Within a month, their campaign raised more than \$10,000 from 150 donors. "Our dream was to reach this point," says Julie, who is on the committee that awards the first scholarship this spring.

"We are very touched by all the support we've had from our donors," says Casey. "Together, we are keeping our mom's values alive."



*Inspired by their mother's values, sisters Casey (left) and Julie created a scholarship.*



370 Main Street, Suite 650  
Worcester, MA 01608  
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## Clark Sociology Students Learn by Giving

This fall, Sociology Professor Rosalie Torres Stone, PhD, is introducing 13 Clark University undergraduates to philanthropy in her new course, *Learning by Giving: Community-Engaged Health Research*.

Combining real-world experience with academic research strengthens both pursuits, says Professor Torres Stone. “Students hear patients’ stories and better understand the factors contributing to health disparities in Worcester’s underserved populations.”

Pamela Kane, who coordinates the Foundation’s grant programs, and Rebecca Riccio, academic advisor of the Learning by Giving Foundation, advised on the syllabus. “The Foundation already engages adults and teens in grantmaking,” says Pamela. “Now, we’re involving college students in philanthropy.” Pamela enlisted four nonprofits that were eager to collaborate with the students: Pernet Family Health Service, the Hector Reyes House, the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center, and the Family Health Center of Worcester.

Working in teams, the students are writing proposals for each agency. They will then form a grantmaking board and award grants to two proposals, distributing \$15,000 donated by the Foundation, Clark’s Mosakowski Institute for Public Enterprise, and the Learning by Giving Foundation.

“Grantmaking is competitive,” says Professor Torres-Stone. “As students review each other’s proposals, they’ll have to consider the greater public good.”

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