

The Reading Center

Dyslexia Institute of Minnesota

www.TheReadingCenter.org



Spring 2016

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DYSLEXIA INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA

"Toward Literacy for All"

Reading Center Tutoring Opens Doors for Bergen *Student's Life Changed for the Better*

734 – That number quickly rolled off the tongue of Jane Burkhardt, mom of high school freshman Bergen Burkhardt. That is how many one-on-one tutoring sessions Bergen has had with a tutor, Lora Keller, since the summer before 2nd grade.

I met with Bergen and his parents last fall to talk about their Reading Center experience and how tutoring has changed Bergen's life for the better. **Both**

Bergen's parents, Jane and Rob, along with their older son, Gunnar, have dyslexia or processing differences. Rob says his father had dyslexia too.

Bergen's dyslexia story starts as many do. His mother knew from a preschool age that Bergen was processing differently. As a dyslexic herself, Jane saw familiar characteristics in him. But the school told her he was too young to be tested.

Jane called the Reading Center, but the cost of testing was unreachable for them. **Like every good**

Mom, Jane went out to search for help on her own.

She shared her story with the proprietor of a Christian book store in town. Jane was looking for books and ideas to help Bergen herself. The owner of the store knew Lora Keller, and an introduction was made.

Bergen got a scholarship for testing at The Reading Center and began tutoring with Lora at her farmhouse.

Bergen's parents say that Lora was the perfect tutor for their son. Bergen is quiet, reserved, and after failure in school had built up a wall around himself concerning academics. Jane says that she thinks because Lora is a mom, the relationship worked with Bergen. Rob says it's because of Lora's patience.

Either way, for the last seven years, Bergen has met with Lora at least twice a week. He says he likes it, though his parents remember how long it took for him to make progress. **Rob says it took about a year for Bergen's wall to come down and for him to get comfortable with Lora.**

Everyone remembers the story of the summer Bergen started tutoring. Lora reports, "The

entire summer after first grade we both sat in the sandbox four times a week saying and tracing letters so he would know how to write and say them. **He has truly come a long way!**" Jane remembers Bergen coming home with sand in his shoes and pants. But he was making progress.



Bergen has had some trouble in school with teachers who did not understand his learning style but has had good experiences as well. They chose Byron High School because they have a block class schedule – less subjects at one time. **Jane says every**

year she presented her "Bergen card" to each new teacher in the fall. Her notes had details about Bergen's learning style - what worked and what did not. Some teachers added to it - and she is grateful for those teachers. Those are the ones that really understood her son.

As I met with Bergen it was hard for him to show his true

self – but his parents, long ago becoming comfortable with being his advocate, telling me story after story. **His parents say he is the nicest most compassionate kid. He never forgets to greet people, including his teachers. He is silly and funny.**

When asked what he sees as his strengths, it is clear Bergen is still developing his confidence.

(continued on back page)

Greetings from the Chair

A Bright Future for our Kids

Every spring, the Reading Center conducts a campaign to raise funds to support our mission.

We are a non-profit that relies on financial donations to continue the good work that we are doing. Many of you reading this know how the Reading Center has served your family or added to your educational skill set through trainings.

The Bright Futures Campaign provides the Reading Center with an opportunity to engage the entire community in supporting our shared mission: teaching people with dyslexia, especially children, how to read. The Campaign seeks to not only engage and expand the donor base of the Reading Center but also spread awareness of dyslexia and our services. This campaign engages a myriad of campaign volunteers to act as our representatives by telling the Reading Center story.

We all agree that the services that the Reading Center offers should not be limited based on the financial means of the child's family. But unfortunately, that is often the case.

Almost half of all donations to the Bright Futures campaign go to scholarships so that we get closer to our goal of testing and tutoring any child who is struggling in school and life due to unexpected problems learning to read, write and spell.

But the Reading Center does more than that. And this campaign funds every aspect of what the Reading Center does. **Financial support will help provide free outreach education to increase understanding of dyslexia; program support to provide Orton-Gillingham Training because costs of high quality training exceed fees; our development of online Orton-Gillingham training, and the hiring of more Orton-Gillingham tutors to reach more kids earlier.**

Your support is also needed for our growing programs like the Rochester Reading Champions - a community collaboration that provides free Orton-Gillingham tutoring to underserved, at-risk students at the Boys and Girls Club, at Adult Detention, MN Teen and Adult Challenge and Hawthorne Adult Education.

You can see all we did last year on page 5. We have reached many people, but we can do more. **This year's goal is to raise \$75,000. Al and Anne Koenig have generously committed \$10,000 in matching funds for donations made to this year's Bright Futures Campaign.**

You may have already received your letter in the mail asking for your financial support. I hope you will join me in giving.



Nicole Blegen
Board Chair

From the Executive Director's Desk



Cindy Russell
Executive Director

I am pleased to report that good and fruitful discussions around dyslexia are being held at the state capitol in St. Paul. This past month, I attended several events with lawmakers both in St. Paul and in Rochester, focused on dyslexia and the Reading Center.

As you may have heard, the Reading Center has a bonding bill before the state legislature that you can read more about on page 3. **Whether the bill passes in**

May or not, the outreach we have done with policymakers and other advocates about dyslexia, what works, and what is needed to help all students learn, has been encouraging.

I can report on two bills before the legislature that are good news for our families. On March 16, I attended two hearings of the Senate on bills Decoding Dyslexia MN is pursuing. In the Senate Tax Committee, I heard testimony about the Reading Credit first enacted in 2014. Several Reading Center families attempted to utilize this credit, some without success. I heard testimony from the Department of Revenue that of the 1,174 applicants for the credit, only 75 were successful - with an average benefit of \$1,160. While that was discouraging, I was pleased to see that momentum to expand and fix this credit was given serious discussion. **The new proposal, Senate File 2283, would give families up to a \$3,000 credit to help pay for the cost of proper reading instruction outside of school.**

The Senate Education Committee heard Senate File 2308 which would create positions for dyslexia specialists within the Department of Education that would be **highly trained using scientific, evidence-based interventions and would serve as the primary source of support to school districts and parents.** We will continue to monitor the status of this bill and are offering our strong advice as to the wording and definitions placed in this bill. It would indeed be a good thing for schools to have access to highly trained dyslexia experts.

Many thanks to Decoding Dyslexia MN for working tirelessly to advocate for positive change for all students with dyslexia in Minnesota. And our outreach efforts are paying dividends as well! I hope I can report good news on these fronts when the legislature adjourns in May.

“When the Reading Center arrives to talk about the bonding bill, legislators have some background understanding of the issue, thanks to Decoding Dyslexia MN.”

Bonding and Legislative Affairs Update

The Reading Center has increased its presence in St. Paul this year as we advocate for proposals to help the Reading Center and the families that we serve.

This session, the Reading Center is pushing for the inclusion of our state bonding proposal into the final package of capital projects the state funds this year. Our bill (Senate File 2258 and House File 2864) has been introduced in both the House and the Senate. And our presentation before the House Education Finance Committee in late March went very well.

The bonding proposal stems from the Reading Center's strategic plan to expand our level of service to the community and move into a building that can better serve our statewide constituency. In 2015, the Reading Center entered into a **partnership with Olmsted County** to develop a request for the state to pay for half the cost of a new building in Rochester.

The request is for \$1.5 million in one-time state money to be matched by \$1.5 million in private donations to the Reading Center. While we do not have a site finalized, the building will remain in the Rochester area.

This proposal was very well received by members of the Senate bonding committee when they visited our building for a tour last fall. And when the legislature reconvened in March, our lead authors **Representative Nels Pierson (Rochester) and Senator Carla Nelson (Rochester) introduced the bill.** It is now making its way through the legislative process.

We will not yet know the success of our proposal until the legislature concludes its business in late May. Thank you to everyone who contacted their own legislators to urge their support of this proposal. It truly helps that lawmakers hear from their own constituents about what is important to families in their district. **If you have not yet added your voice to the chorus of supporters, please consider doing so before time runs out!**

We can take nothing for granted. Please contact your MN legislator and senator and tell them how important Reading Center/Dyslexia Institute of MN programming is in the state. Ask them to support the modest bonding proposal that will have a huge impact statewide.

Dyslexia Day at the Capitol – April 5th

For the second year, the grassroots parent advocacy group Decoding Dyslexia, organized a day in Saint Paul to increase awareness about dyslexia. The Reading Center participated as an event sponsor. Former Reading Center student, Tim Jirik, attended and testified in committee. **More than 150 people from across Minnesota were there to bring awareness to the issue of dyslexia.**

The following is an excerpt from the testimony of Tim Jirik, age 15, to the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Tim Jirik and I am a 10th grader at John Marshall High School in Rochester, MN. I am dyslexic. My problems reading were apparent when I was in first grade, so I was tested and put on an IEP...The Special Ed classes started in 2nd grade and after a year, when my parents felt I was not getting any better, they started to look for help outside the school.

I took a summer school class from the Reading Center and made enough progress that my family enrolled me in one to one tutoring...**even though I was identified as having a reading disability and placed on an IEP, the school was not able to give me the help I needed** to become a reader. And it wasn't because they didn't want to help me, they were nice to me, **it was because they didn't know HOW to help me.**

Now I am active in my school and serve on the student council, I'm on the Speech team and we are going to compete in the next level of sectionals on a Thursday. I just earned the rank Eagle Scout. I'm still dyslexic and the work is not easy for me. . . . Most of my teachers don't know what dyslexia is or how it impacts me...**if our teachers had the training to recognize and help kids like me IN the schools, I wouldn't have struggled as much to learn to read. My parents wouldn't have had to seek and pay for a tutor.**

Please support this bill.

Key Points To Know and Share

We have resided in our current building since 2000 but have long since outgrown the space.

We have plans to build a \$3 million building paid for with \$1.5 million in private donations and a one-time bonding request of \$1.5 million from the state of Minnesota.

Drawing attention to the issue of dyslexia and our sought-out evidence-based remediation strategies, will have positive consequences for our mission.

Since 1951, we have served almost 9,000 students and trained almost 1,700 teachers in Orton-Gillingham multi-sensory reading instruction.

Dyslexia affects 15-20% of the population, or 2-3 kids in every classroom

Since 2010 we have served students from 34 Minnesota counties and 9 states.

Our goal is to reach 56% more students by 2018.

We provide nearly \$100,000 per year in free scholarships, testing, tutoring and training.



Tim, his family, RC staff, and our senators at the Capitol.

New Scholarship Fund to honor Dr. Terri Edwards

For many years, Dr. Terri Edwards has been a tireless supporter of the Reading Center. She is a current board member, a former Board Chair, she sits on several committees, and does tons of work behind the scenes to build the Reading Center's success. All three of her children were students at the Reading Center, along with her husband, Dr. Brooks Edwards.

Knowing that Terri is both a proud dyslexia advocate and modest person, **Brooks took it upon himself to plan the perfect surprise for Terri's 60th birthday in February.** He teamed up with Executive Director Cindy Russell to create a gift he knew Terri would love and appreciate.

Behind the scenes for many weeks, Brooks approached family, friends and colleagues to donate to a scholarship fund in Terri's honor. **When the campaign was finished, 43 individual families donated more than \$20,000 to the Dr. Terri Edwards Scholarship Fund.**

Terri was brought to tears by the gestures and says **"I am most grateful for my family and friends who gave me the most meaningful gift ever. Through their generosity, doors of opportunity will be opened for many. I feel truly blessed by their kindness."**

Cindy Russell gave Brooks a certificate listing all the names of the donors to present to Terri. Cindy says, "It is an honor to have the Edwards family so connected to the Reading Center's mission. And we know that the students who receive scholarship tutoring because of this generous gesture by Terri's friends and family, will gain confidence and success worth much more than the original donation."



Terri Edwards, MD is being honored with a named scholarship fund at the Reading Center



Fill up your child's summer with friendship, reading, and fun!

Best of Basics Summer Program 2016

Children and youth from pre-K to 12th grade can start the next school year with a **boost to their skills** when they enroll in the Reading Center's Best of Basics Summer Program. **Best of Basics is held from July 11 to August 5:** Choose from two or four, intensive weeks of Orton-Gillingham-based intervention! Class sizes are kept very small, and all instructors are experienced Orton-Gillingham tutors.

Classes for teens are held in the afternoons at the Reading Center. All elementary classes are held at Calvary Evangelical Free Church in the mornings.

If the approach to teaching used at school has not been working for your child, try a different approach, such as the one offered at the Reading Center.

For a full listing of Best of Basics Summer Program classes and registration information, please go to www.TheReadingCenter.org or see newsletter insert. New this year – online registration!!! Limited scholarships are available for families with a demonstrated need.



Make your Tutor's Day

Best part of RC's Tutor Appreciation Luncheon in May: the notes from students and families!

More than 8,000 families have seen their children bloom in confidence and ability due to the expertise and caring of Reading Center tutors. We take the opportunity in May to thank our tutors with a luncheon that includes recognitions and thank you notes from students, former students, and families of students.

Each year we hear something similar from the tutors: the best part of the event is the notes they receive from their students and families.

If you would like to tell your tutor or former tutor about the impact she had on your life, please mail, drop off or email a note of appreciation to read@TheReadingCenter.org, or send your note card in care of Barb Arens at the Reading Center, 847 5th Street NW, Rochester, MN 55901. Notes must be received by May 1, so please send in your notes ASAP.

Many thanks to Thrivent Financial again for sponsoring the Tutor Appreciation Luncheon this year and helping us make it a nice event for our tutors.



**THRIVENT
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The Reading Center Helps Hundreds of Students in 2015

Changing lives, helping students achieve success

• **\$56,357 in scholarships** was provided to **70 students and trainees** (36 in tutoring, 16 in testing, 4 in Institute, and 14 in student classes). **26% of our students are receiving scholarship assistance.**

• **53 District elementary teachers** received Orton-Gillingham training customized for the classroom.

• **76 adults and children** received nationally-normed testing to identify their reading struggles. **16 received scholarships.**

• **26 young students** received free Reading Readiness screenings. **28 young learners** attended Reading Clubs with their parents.

• **7,344 sessions** of Educational Therapy (tutoring) were provided to 161 students to improve their reading ability.

• **65 students** were enrolled in our Best of Basics Summer Program to sharpen their skills over the summer.

• **36 educators and parents** were trained in the Orton-Gillingham approach at the Reading Center's Basic and Advanced Institutes – the gold standard of Orton-Gillingham training.

• **2,718 parents** and others attended one of 27 free outreach educational presentations offered by the Reading Center or stopped by one of 9 Reading Center displays to learn about dyslexia and our services from a Reading Center expert.



Bright Futures Friends Co-Chairs, Danny Bucknell and John Caldwell, are helping to ensure all children receive the help they need.

2016 Bright Futures Campaign Leadership Announced

We need you to ensure that scholarships and tutors are there for students in need!

Help a child reach his or her potential one lesson at a time through the **2016 Bright Futures Campaign.** Last year, thanks to donors, the Reading Center provided more than \$56,000 in scholarships to the 26% of students whose families could not afford Orton-Gillingham tutoring.

This year, our challenge is to make up for a loss of a major source for our Orton-Gillingham Institute and Infusion training support: to increase the number of trained Orton-Gillingham tutors and to collaborate in the community to reach underserved at risk youth.

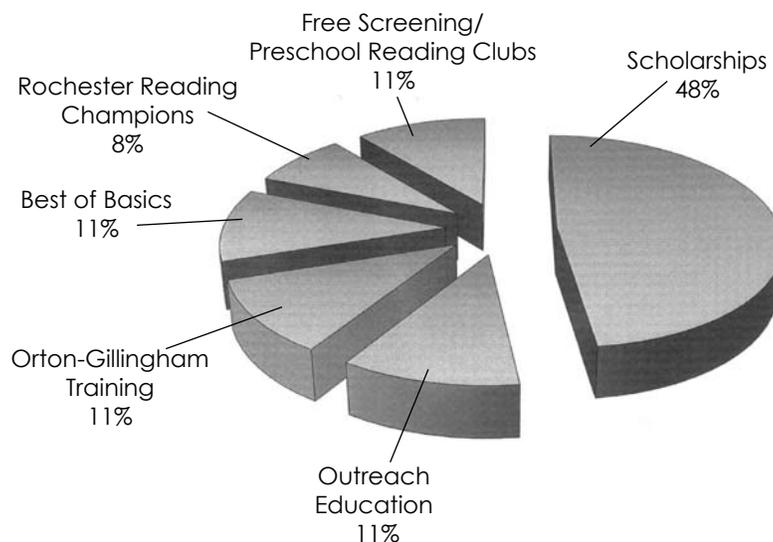
Matching funds will leverage the impact of your gift, thanks to **Anne and Al Koenig.** Even if you do not pay on your pledge until the end of December, any pledges received during the Bright Futures Campaign will be matched (up to \$500 per person). First come, first served while the matching funds last!

One hundred percent of the Board of Directors have donated and exceeded their goal, and Staff too have given and set an impressive pace for a successful Bright Futures Campaign 2016. As of now, **Staff, Therapists and the Board have all met their goals and have donated over \$26,000 to support the mission of the Reading Center** and to ensure that children have access to the programs that make a real difference in their lives.

Mike Fogarty, Jr. is serving as the General Chair of the 2016 Bright Futures Campaign for the Reading Center. The Leadership Council for the Campaign includes Nicole Blegen, Chair of the Board Campaign; Terri Edwards, M.D., Chair of the Major Gifts Campaign; Lora Keller, Chair of the Staff/Therapist Campaign; John Caldwell and Danny Bucknell, Co-Chairs of the Friends Campaign.

Funds raised during the Bright Futures Campaign **provide scholarships for children whose parents are unable to afford testing and tutoring and to underwrite our Orton-Gillingham Training Institutes and Best of Basics.** It's all about making sure that children can read. Children deserve a Bright Future; reading is a key piece of attaining that goal.

Where Your Bright Futures Dollars Go



Many Thanks to Our Contributors

November 1, 2015 - March 21, 2016

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of you who have so generously pledged or donated to the Reading Center. We strive to list our donors accurately, but occasionally we make a mistake. If your donation has been omitted, your entry is misspelled or put in a wrong giving level, please contact Sarah Carlson-Wallrath (scarlsonwallrath@thereadingcenter.org).

If you would like to make a contribution, please use our secure online server at www.TheReadingCenter.org, contact us at 507-288-5271, or use the enclosed envelope. **Please remember the mission of the Reading Center in your will. Thank you!**

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 (How to Teach Reading II)
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- July 14 – August 4.....Basic Training Institute**
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- July 11 – August 5.....Best of Basics Summer Program
 2016**
 Deadline to avoid late fee:
 June 15
- October 8.....3rd Annual
 Super Hero Dyslexia Dash**
 5K Fun Run/Walk at
 Soldier's Field Picnic Shelter area
- November 13.....Bright Stars Event**
 to celebrate our 65 years of service

(Bergen, continued from page 1)

clear Bergen is still developing his confidence. He tells me he reads for fun – graphic novels are his favorite. And he smiles when his parents tell me what they see as his strengths. **He is good at math. He is creative. He loves to create vines and has more than 150 followers online.**

It has been Bergen's decision to continue tutoring with Lora even after seven years. He likes how she thinks out of the box, and meeting with her gives him a little more security as he continues in school.



Bergen has a bright future ahead. And The Reading Center is pleased to be part of it.