

|| SUSTAINING SMART ||

There are many ways to support SMART and help us sustain our mission to build strong, confident readers:

SMART LEGACY SOCIETY

Contributors who name SMART as a beneficiary in their will, living trust, life insurance policy or retirement plan become members of **SMART's Legacy Society**, a special giving society to recognize these dedicated supporters. For more information, please contact Sharon Benson at 971-634-1620 or sbenson@getsmartoregon.org.



Sandy Marks (left) read at Mae Richardson Elementary in Central Point, Ore. for 10 years. A retired nurse, she was described as "sweet" by the SMART staff, and helped co-coordinate a program one year when SMART was short-staffed.

Sandy passed away in 2014. SMART learned of her passing from a mutual friend, who also notified us that Sandy left SMART a significant bequest in her living trust and percentage of her retirement fund.

We were saddened to learn of Sandy's passing, yet honored that Sandy chose to leave a legacy for children who participate in SMART in Jackson County. We will use a portion of the bequest to establish a local endowment to encourage a love of reading and books for generations of SMART students.



The **SMART Circle** is a giving society for annual contributors of \$1,000 or more to SMART. For a list of SMART Circle members, visit www.getsmartoregon.org/our-community/supporters.

LEADERS for LITERACY

Leaders for Literacy is SMART's special giving society that recognizes our most generous individual supporters each year. For a list of Leaders for Literacy members, visit www.getsmartoregon.org/our-community/supporters.

SPONSOR A SMART SCHOOL

SMART School Sponsors are companies, individuals and foundations that help SMART sites in their communities thrive through providing vital funding and volunteer support. For a list of SMART School Sponsors, visit www.getsmartoregon.org/our-community/school-sponsors.

If you're interested in learning more about the SMART Circle, Leaders for Literacy or Sponsor a SMART School, please contact us at 971-634-1634.

SMART EXECUTIVE STAFF

Chris Otis, Executive Director
Jessica Corcoran, Communications Director
Rachel Lawrence, Program Director
Nell Whitman, Director of Finance and Administration

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SHOPPING SMART

You can support SMART by shopping with the following retailers:

- **Amazon Smile:** Shop from www.smile.amazon.com and select Oregon Children's Foundation (that's us). Then, Amazon will donate 0.5 percent of your purchase to us.
- **Fred Meyer Rewards:** Link your Fred Meyer Rewards to SMART at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. Search for us by name or our nonprofit number: 91652. Each time you use your Rewards, card we earn a donation!



SMART NEWSLETTER

Spring/Summer 2015

Inspire a child's next chapter.

|| READING CHANGES THE STORY ||

Greetings, SMART friends and volunteers!

Thanks to your support and generosity, SMART has reached over 9,500 Oregon students this year with one-on-one reading support and more than 86,000 books to keep. Nearly 5,000 Site Coordinators and Readers have made this possible through their weekly volunteer commitment to encouraging students along the path to reading and learning.

I experience daily affirmations of the importance of SMART's work, whether it's spending Tuesday mornings reading with Johnny and Gloria at Rosa Parks Elementary, or a recent Portland City Club event where I was invited to speak to a group of high school students engaged in civic leadership – some of whom happened to be former SMART students.

Importantly, research tells us that SMART works: 60 percent of students in the program as first-graders are more likely to reach reading benchmarks in fifth grade than nonparticipants. Among SMART teachers and principals, over 90 percent tell us that their students benefit significantly from the program, and that SMART contributes positively to literacy outcomes at their schools.

In addition to exceeding our goal to reach 9,500 students, the 2014-15 year brought many positive developments:

- **SMART received the American Prize in Literacy from the U.S. Library of Congress.** This prestigious award served as validation of SMART's impact and a testament to the hard work of thousands of Oregonians who have made it possible.
- We launched two important initiatives that will continually transform and improve our organization and the service we provide to our students, volunteers and communities: **Equity and Program Quality Initiatives.**
 - Ultimately, SMART exists to give children a greater chance at success. With the potential for social, economic and racial inequities to create barriers to success, we have a responsibility to ensure our organization is equitable and culturally inclusive. SMART's **Equity Initiative** will influence every aspect of our organization, including how we recruit and train staff and volunteers; how we engage our communities; and how we work with our students. This will be an ongoing journey for SMART and, although it will be challenging and complex, I look forward to the work ahead, as it stands to make SMART even stronger and more effective.
 - As you'll read more about in this newsletter, we are keenly focused on qualitative growth, and launched a **Program Quality Initiative** to improve efficacy, evaluation, and training, among other outcomes.

I'm continually encouraged and awed by SMART's upward trajectory, and you are directly to thank for that. We are grateful for your support in creating brighter futures for Oregon kids through reading.

Warmly,
Chris Otis
SMART Executive Director



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2015 SMART GALA

SMART extends a hearty thank you and congratulations to our Board of Directors and event committee for another successful SMART Gala! Over 450 community leaders helped raise more than \$490,000 to bring the joy of reading to Oregon children!

With appreciation to our lead Sponsors:

SPECIAL THANKS TO PRESENTING SPONSOR KNOWLEDGE UNIVERSE FOR GENEROUSLY SUPPORTING SMART'S EFFORTS TO SHARE THE MAGIC OF READING WITH OREGON CHILDREN.



EMPOWERMENT TO SUCCEED SPONSOR



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EVALUATION OF PREK AND KINDERGARTEN SMART MODELS REVEALS POSITIVE OUTCOMES

SMART has three delivery models: our standard model in which students are selected by their teacher and pulled out of the classroom to participate, and two more recent additions, preschool (PreK SMART) and kindergarten (KSMART) delivery models that serve the entire classroom. Thanks to a grant from The Ford Family Foundation, and in partnership with Portland State University, we recently concluded a three-year evaluation specifically examining PreK and KSMART service in Oregon's rural counties. The study filled a vital gap in SMART program data, and identified positive outcomes for students. Among the evaluation's findings:

- PreK SMART and KSMART models are helping build young children's early excitement and interest in books and reading.
- KSMART students improved more in reading interest compared to their peers in control classrooms.
- PreK SMART students showed more improvement in reading comprehension and interest in reading than control classroom students.

OREGON LITERACY NONPROFITS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES BAND TOGETHER TO BUILD SUCCESSFUL FUTURES FOR CHILDREN

SMART has joined with local literacy nonprofits to form the Early Literacy Success Alliance (ELSA). ELSA is a coalition of Oregon nonprofit partners and public libraries that support our state's public schools in reaching literacy goals. Collectively, we provide coordinated, deliberate, culturally responsive early literacy strategies. SMART is joined in ELSA by six members:



- Black Parent Initiative
- The Children's Book Bank
- Oregon Public Libraries
- Reach Out and Read Oregon
- Reading Results
- The Shadow Project

To learn more about ELSA, visit www.earlyliteracysuccess.org.



SMART has met the Better Business Bureau's 20 rigorous standards for charity accountability, earning the BBB Charity Seal.

2014-15 STATEWIDE IMPACT



267 sites



5,170 volunteers



9,501 students



146,391 volunteer hours



\$3,074,211 donated value of volunteer hours



105,680 books given

SMART PROGRAM QUALITY INITIATIVE

By Rachel Lawrence
SMART Program Director

Over the last four years, SMART has grown the number of students served statewide by nearly 40 percent, from 6,800 to over 9,500. In fulfilling our strategic goal of serving more children who most need us with the greatest impact possible, we now shift our focus from quantitative growth to qualitative growth. Our next growth phase is aimed at addressing program quality-related items that will prepare us for future success and ultimately lead to better outcomes for students.

As a first step, SMART worked with researchers from Portland State University to complete a statewide Process Study that solicited feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including volunteers and educators. Results from the Process Study create a clear picture of strengths, focus areas, and opportunities for improvement. We're excited about these opportunities for program enhancements, which will result in strong program outcomes for all participants.

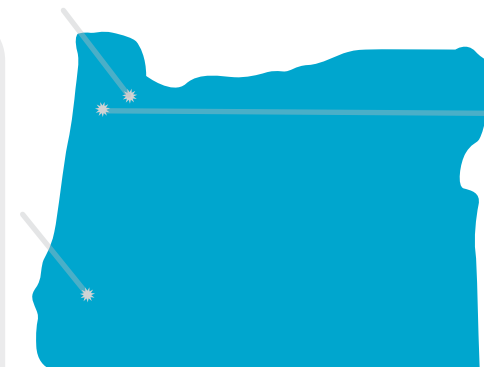
We have defined four primary components of the Program Quality Initiative to occur over the next three years:

1. **Increase program efficacy by implementing more expansive internal accountability controls, and increased support to staff and volunteers.** This will include increased and enhanced training, evaluation, accountability systems, and direct field supervision.
2. **Continue in-depth program evaluation.** We will deepen our understanding of the critical components of SMART and the ways in which we are improving children's literacy. Issues like service dosage and differences in outcomes based on demographics are aspects of the SMART program we need to better understand.
3. **Continue improvements to training for staff and volunteers.** Training to be added will include topics like volunteer management, cultural responsiveness and inclusion, Common Core State Standards, and enhanced volunteer screening.
4. **Revision of book selection.** We will overhaul the book selection process and inventories in light of considerations around Common Core, equity and inclusion. We will establish a defined permanent book collection for each site to ensure children have access to high-quality books that mirror their own cultural identities and provide windows into other cultures.

STORIES OF SMART

Cascade Locks: In February, SMART students and teachers at Cascade Locks Elementary made special Valentines for their volunteers. Some of the notes read: "You are really smart. I love SMART," "You're awesome. You make my life so much better," and "You're the best people ever."

Camas Valley: In the small town of Camas Valley, nearly one-third of the entire community is volunteering with SMART. Twenty SMART volunteers read with 50 students each week at Camas Valley Charter School. This thriving program is a great example of what happens when a community rallies around the common cause of helping local kids build their reading skills and self-confidence.



Milwaukie: A kindergarten teacher at Oak Grove Elementary provided feedback on how her students in SMART had progressed throughout the year:

- "Kevin began school in January with no previous experience in school. He has grown so much and loves being in SMART. Building relationships with adults in a one-on-one setting has been a gift to Kevin."
- "Cameron loves SMART and hearing stories. I feel the experience has been so good for his confidence and his self-esteem has sky-rocketed."