



# Winter 2018

Preparing Colorado's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together.

I wasn't a natural bookworm as a kid. I struggled with a short attention span, and would have rather been playing baseball or Pac Man but it was important to my mom that I grow up reading. She made it a priority to read to me and with me since I can remember, and it was a habit I came to enjoy.

By 1st grade, I was writing stories inside a black and white composition notebook and reading them aloud to students in other classrooms, seniors in nursing homes and other community audiences. My teacher at PS #45 in Buffalo, New York wrote "I love to hear you read." on the first page of that composition notebook and those words were an important early part of my story that led me to be a champion of early literacy at Reach Out and Read Colorado.

Those early experiences built my confidence and my appetite for learning, and so I read on, with a lot of support along the way. I spent many nights working on homework alongside my mom. My aunt would stop at travel agencies whenever I was doing a project on a new country, so I'd have access to information and photos. I would eat dinner and sleep over at a friend's house when we would stay up late working on group projects, a true extension of family. All these moments, big and small, showed me the importance of education and it being a gateway to my destiny. Ultimately, I was the first in my family to earn a college degree, and then a graduate degree, which was all possible with financial aid and scholarship, but even more so because of an upbringing with a focus on learning. After college, my first full-time job was in adult literacy and I came to the office every day to help give others a hand up by emphasizing the transformative power of learning.



Perry Jowsey, age three, shoveling snow outside his childhood home in Buffalo, New York.



I know it wasn't always easy for my mom to invest time in me - with three younger siblings and financial concerns - but at the time I assumed this was just the norm for all families. I recognized later how essential that parent, teacher, and broader support from the community was to my development and in my ability to be a leader in my own community. It's something I think about every day now, as a single father of a nine-year-old, knowing that his development, education, and opportunity will be tied largely to the time we spend now, in an environment that supports and encourages learning.

I made a choice to lead fundraising at Reach Out and Read Colorado in 2013 because I believe this is the best investment donors can make to promote a positive future for young children. When I ask people to support this mission, it's because I know the importance of early literacy from my own childhood, my past work in adult literacy, and my current role as a dad. I'm asking them to write a success story, where it's been shown that dedicating resources in early childhood education has a much greater ROI than any other educational intervention. I'm asking them to help build young brains and family bonds, that I know first-hand are essential to opportunity. And I'm asking them to invest in the future of our community, where a simple act now can reverberate for generations to come. These pillars are all core to my experience, and I'm grateful every day to be a part of the Reach Out and Read Colorado community of changemakers who envision a new frontier for families in our state.

**Feature by Perry Jowsey, Development Director at Reach Out and Read Colorado**

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### From the Desk of Meredith Hintze



Reading has always been a priority in my life. My mom and grandmother read to me frequently starting from birth, and it became a staple in my childhood. I can remember sitting up in my childhood bed, listening to my mom read aloud to my sister in her bedroom down the hallway, clutching my book, and waiting for my one-on-one bedtime story. I'm the oldest, so I always went last, but that meant my turn was the longest.

As Perry mentions in his piece, growing up in a home where learning and education was a priority was the greatest blessing, one that I have begun to share with my children. But, as we all know, it can take more than the care of family members for children to succeed and thrive. My family was extremely fortunate to have the steadfast support of the beloved and well-respected Rabbi Daniel Goldberger. When I was in middle school, after my father died, Rabbi Goldberger stepped in to provide support to my family when we needed it the most. While in general I was blessed with a childhood full of opportunity, it was clear when our family was faced with adversity, that the support of the community around us was increasingly important.

Here at Reach Out and Read Colorado, we are so thankful for the individuals, organizations and foundations inside these pages that made our work possible to serve more than 120,000 Colorado children over the past year. In a time when some estimates predict a \$20 billion decrease in charitable giving in 2018, your contribution is especially important. We will continue to spotlight our community by listing all donations of \$100+ made through May in our Summer Newsletter. It's our small way to thank you for giving this priceless gift to families across Colorado, and we hope that you'll continue to make Reach Out and Read Colorado a giving priority.

