

Report On
Our First
World's Largest
Bedtime Story

June 28th, 2008



WORLD'S LARGEST BEDTIME STORY
JUNE 28, 2008
ONCENTER BALLROOM



The Oncenter ballroom was the venue for our 1st staging of the World's Largest Bedtime Story. The stage was set with a backdrop to resemble a child's room painted by Holly Luedtke of Syracuse Stage, complete with the very inviting "Mission" style bed, provided by Stickley Audi & Company. Patricia Schmidt of LeMoyne College, one of our advisors and celebrity readers, provided the evocative bedding.

The children were seated on the floor before the stage, many in pajamas, and they interacted enthusiastically and well with the performers and celebrity readers.



The magician, Moreland, began performing before the official start of the program with the creation of balloon animals that “tickled” the early arrivals. The musical group, *Milk & Cookies* (Donna Butterfield and Sharon Allen) also engaged the children with well-known songs.

Parent tips were given throughout the program. They were derived in part from *A Child Becomes a Reader*.

Parent Tip 1: ABC’s and Hygiene

It takes 20 seconds of friction to get rid of germs when washing. That is about the length of time it takes to sing the ABC song. So, you can kill germs and work on pre-reading skills at the same time.

Parent Tip 2: Reading Aloud to Children

Reading aloud to children has been called the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for success in reading.

Parent Tip 3: Reading the Same Book

Reading the same book more than once is okay. In doing so, kids learn more vocabulary, the flow of language, and it helps to see familiar words in print.

The celebrity readers sat and read from the edge of the stage close to the audience. As they read, the colorful graphics and words showed up on the two screens at either side of the stage, courtesy of Visual Technologies. This required a second copy of each book and a “page turner” behind the curtain that kept up with the reader. This enabled young readers and parents to read along with our celebrities.

Each of our amazing “cast” engaged the children in the story reading. Jackie Robinson, our favorite news anchor from WSTM television station, Patricia “Patty” Schmidt of LeMoyne College, Quentin Hillsman, Syracuse University Women’s Basketball coach, Lisa Alford, Commissioner for Syracuse/Onondaga County Dept. of Aging & Youth, Jackie Grace Rasheed, Hughes School, and Joanne M. Mahoney, County Executive.

- Moreland the Magician returned during the program and provided more than magic. He talked about the importance of using the library and told how his pet rabbit, Myron, was away getting a library card. Later, Myron magically arrived before the end of the program to the great delight of all.

- Clifford the Big Red Dog, courtesy of Barnes & Noble, drew all the children close to cuddle up to him.



- At this point, *Milk & Cookies* returned with their special Clifford song. (Sharon Allen, of *Milk & Cookies*, is also an author. She recently wrote *Outside Today*, a delightful children’s book that describes what to do outside in the four seasons (music CD included).
- Jackie Grace Rasheed – captivated the audience with a story told with great dramatic effect and enthusiasm that had the children at the edge of their seats!

Patricia Edwards, Ph. D., Michigan State University, and President of the Board of the International Reading Association, told a bit of her family history growing up African American in the segregated deep south and of her family’s efforts to be literate and educated. She also gave information on her program “Talking Your Way to Literacy.” Here are ten ways she suggested:

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|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Talk | 6. Visit the School |
| 2. Listen | 7. Visit the Library |
| 3. Read | 8. Explore |
| 4. Give Books | 9. Play Games |
| 5. Share Your Time | 10. Enjoy Your Books |

Finally, County Executive Mahoney read, *Cock-a-Doodle Quack Quack*, but not before describing her own evening ritual of reading to her children. She read with several children on her lap and draped over her.

Despite the program lasting a bit longer than anticipated, the children were saddened when they learned that the program was at an end.

When asked if they wanted to do this again, they all cheered enthusiastically!

Following the story time, the children and adults were treated to the “other” milk and cookies, coloring books, literacy tattoos (temporary) from Literacy Volunteers of Greater Syracuse (see below), library card sign ups, new and used books, and photo opportunities with Clifford.



Other Outcomes

The day after the bedtime story, there was still a “buzz” going on about the event at one of our area churches. As a consequence, the pastor of the church contacted the County Executive’s office through a county employee, to request help in putting together a Family Literacy Day (FLD).

The “FLD” took place on July 13th and resulted in parents getting information on library locations, names of children’s librarians, hours of operation, recommendations for age appropriate books, and books. Many families also signed a literacy covenant (copy attached) that commits the parents to promoting reading in the home. This “FLD” may be a much-needed prototype for additional outreach.

Future

In order to increase attendance in the future and to get the right attendees the following will be required:

- Early commitment of celebrity readers so they can be named on publicity posters
- A clear representation that the event is free
- More outreach to families, community based organizations, churches, and other religious institutions, etc.
- An event date before the school year ends
- Must link to schools
- Must link to parents
- Provide transportation?

Where we promoted the event:

Southside Neighborhood

Salvation Army

Educators Conference attendees at LeMoyne College

Workshop for Librarians and Public Health Nursing staff

Libraries – urban branches

Literacy partners

Community Health Centers

Next year:

Buses and Bus shelter promotion

Where else ?

The First World's Largest Bedtime Story was a great programmatic success. The most difficult challenge is getting the parents and children that can most benefit from the program to attend this and other similar opportunities. Enabling their success will require a community-wide effort.

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PARTIAL CONTACT LIST OF PARTNERS AND PRESENTERS

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