Dear READ Center family,
If you had told me in January that we would be dealing with a pandemic in March, I would not have believed you. But here we are. Information is changing constantly and we are trying to make the best decisions for READ Center students, tutors, staff, volunteers and supporters. Bear with us as we update our response to COVID-19 as we learn more each day. Our website, readcenter.org, has the latest information on what READ is doing.

Students
We would have liked more time to prepare our students to be out of class for an extended period, but the virus moved quickly and our sites were closed to us. However, in true READ fashion, we have pulled together and are working hard to make sure students continue to improve their literacy skills.

- READ classes closed on March 13 and are scheduled to resume on May 4 for the summer semester.
- The READ education staff is working on plans to keep students learning in case we cannot return for the summer trimester as planned.
- Information about how READ continues to serve its students can be found under “Where There’s a Will, There’s A Way” on page 4.

Volunteer Tutors
The Tutor Orientation scheduled for March and Tutor Training scheduled for April have been postponed. New dates will be sent out to prospective tutors when we have a better idea when it is safe to resume group activities.

Staff
The READ Center office is open with just two staff in each day and all READ staff working from home on Fridays. We want to be here if our students, teachers or volunteers need us. READ teachers are working with staff, students and tutors from home.

Our Community
Richmond is our home. We are worried about those in our community who are food and financially insecure, those who are struggling to juggle work and childcare, those whose health puts them at a higher risk and those who are stressed, anxious and scared. We are using our social media accounts to post information about resources and volunteer needs in the community. We will connect our students to the services they need to stay healthy, housed and fed during this crisis.

Right now we do not know when this crisis will end. We will continue to communicate on READ Center operations with you through newsletters, emails, social media and calls.

Stay safe and healthy,
Karen La Forge, Executive Director, READ Center Staff and READ Center Board of Directors

See more information on how our programs team is handling the outbreak on page 4.
Create a Legacy of Learning

“The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it.”
William James

What will your legacy be?

A legacy gift is one of the greatest gifts you can give those you leave behind. It reflects the things you find most meaningful in life, and ensures that you are leaving a positive impact in your community.

You can create a legacy of learning for adults in Richmond by remembering The READ Center in your will or estate plans. It is a great way to change lives through adult literacy for years to come. Your gift can provide READ with funding for books, classes, staff, and more. It allows adults to reach new heights, which include gaining employment, improving their health and financial wellbeing, and enabling them to end the cycle of low educational attainment.

Remembering READ in your will, through a trust, or life insurance helps to keep READ’s literacy programs going strong for the future. It does not require a large income or vast estate, just the thoughtful intention of continuing your commitment to READ Center students.

Everyone needs and deserves a literate life. If you are interested in learning more about including READ in your will or estate plans, please email Karen La Forge at karen@readcenter.org.

Experts in Adult Literacy

READ teachers present at VALRC Conference

READ teachers Carolyn Harsh and Janet Sodell took their show on the road to the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) Conference in Harrisonburg, where they presented to other adult literacy teachers and volunteers from around the state.

Carolyn presented “300 Prompts to Promote Prose, Proficiency, and Persistence.” Carolyn, a retired special education teacher, has used writing prompts with students in her classes to improve their writing skills and confidence.

Janet presented “Using Games and Activities to Elevate Students to Teachers.” Teaching something is a great way to learn it.

Janet was also scheduled to present at the national COABE conference in April, but it has been postponed. She is the first READ teacher selected to present at a national conference.
You Got This.

READ Student Awareness Campaign

“Once I shared with someone about my reading difficulty and it placed my job in jeopardy. That person told people that I could not read well. So to save myself the embarrassment, I resigned from a good job. As I look back at that time in my life I think if I was more open with my reading as I’m today, I would have a better job.”
—READ student Stacy.

Many of our students feel like Stacy did before finding The READ Center. Adults who struggle with literacy try to hide it, develop coping mechanisms, and put up walls to protect themselves. There is a great deal of shame and embarrassment. They feel both helpless and hopeless. Stories like Stacy’s are all too common at The READ Center.

The READ Center’s new student awareness campaign offers hope to people who need it. The message is simple and positive: You Got This. While those coming to us may not yet believe it, The READ Center does. They need kindness, support and the instruction they will receive at The READ Center to achieve their goals and change their lives. It is never too late to learn to read.

Two billboards are currently up in the Richmond area. One is on Jeff Davis Highway on the southside, while the other is in the North Side on Brookland Park Blvd. The campaign has generated 6 new students in its first two months. They've got this, and we have got them!

The Great Richmond Trivia Bee has been Postponed to September 30th.

Same place: U-Turn Sports
Same time: 6-9pm
New date!
There are still a few team slots open. For more information, visit readcenter.org.

March/April: All READ events cancelled
May 4th: Tentative First Day of Summer; subject to change
May 4th-7th: Teacher Appreciation Week
May 25th: Memorial Day— No Classes/Office Closed
Where There’s A Will, There’s A Way
How READ program staff are responding to COVID-19

“We are a community of learners, and where there is a will, there is a way to continue to learn even amid chaos and confusion.”

READ Program Manager Nausha Brown Chavez is not deterred by the recent outbreak of COVID-19. While the challenge of dealing with the pandemic is immense, READ’s commitment to its students has not wavered. READ has canceled classes through May to keep students, staff and volunteers safe, but each class continues to provide instruction as best as it can throughout the unscheduled break.

“As a staff, we have worked diligently to ensure students are still receiving instruction until the semester ends. Teachers and tutors are continuing the learning process via phone.” Teachers and programs staff have been working hard to tailor the curriculum to deal with the circumstances and students’ needs.

READ is making sure that no student is left out, says Nausha. “From the office, we are sending active students a copy of News for You, an easy-to-read newspaper students are familiar with, in case there is no computer or phone connection where they live.” This will help students stay up-to-date on news around the world while still practicing their reading.

Classes are currently scheduled to resume for the summer semester on May 4th, but READ is preparing for an even longer layoff if it is needed. Teachers are pairing students and tutors so they can work by phone. Teachers are also adding materials to packets that are being mailed to students so they can continue to be engaged and to learn.

Register to become a Volunteer Tutor on April 1st

“Literacy is something I know that I have taken for granted. Being able to share my knowledge and to influence the growth of another’s education is so humbling... The READ Center fosters the most positive experience for both the tutor and the student. My only regret is that I didn’t start sooner!” - Kady Salmon, volunteer tutor and READ board member.

Even though Volunteer tutor orientations and trainings are currently on hold, registration for future events will open on April 1. You can submit your application on our website at: readcenter.org/volunteer-opportunities.

Helping an adult improve their literacy skills is a rewarding experience and can change his or her life.