

Organize a Book Drive



Step 1: Plan Your Book Drive

- Contact United Way of Northeast Florida's ReadingPals Coordinator at 904-390-3264 or madib@uwnefl.org to let us know you want to organize a book drive. We will match you with a ReadingPals location nearby that needs books.
- Form a small team to run and support the book drive. You may have a primary person to get things organized, but a book drive is a team effort. Talk to others and get the buzz going!
- A book drive typically lasts 2 weeks– 1 month. You will need boxes, storage space for collected books, electronic and physical fliers.
- Set concrete, impact-based goals for yourself and with your team.
- Designate a group member to track and share the results. For example, "Our team will report progress every Friday. The person responsible for reporting results for your team is _____."
- Consider incentives: Motivate your friends and co-workers to donate by creating a competition or organizing a raffle. Keep track of which location gathers the greatest number of books. Record which individual contributes the greatest number of books. Recognize the donors with certificates/awards.
- Spread the word: Decide how people will be encouraged to participate. The most successful way to gather books is to ask your personal network to contribute. These requests will be most successful when made in person or by phone. Fliers and emails are useful, but less successful.
- Plan a kickoff event: your office could incorporate the kick off into a staff meeting, your faith group could request books at service or you could host a party and invite everyone to bring a book.

Step 2: Collect Books

- Set up one or more large containers (box, barrel, basket, etc) in central, highly visible, convenient areas. Be sure to use the ReadingPals poster to identify your containers.
- Use the customizable ReadingPals flyer and post it in high traffic areas. You will also want to email book drive information.
- Describe the types of books you are collecting and distribute the ReadingPals recommended book list.
- Keep track of your progress: you can track number of books collected, number of people asked to donate, number of book drive bin locations and number of active volunteers.

Step 3: During Your Book Drive

- Keep track of the books you collect and share the results. Post a progress report or “thermometer” near the collection box to encourage more participation.
- Remember: Just about everyone wants to contribute, but they may need frequent, cheerful reminders to bring in their books
- If your organization has a Facebook page, post your book drive and progress there. If you are open to having customers or clients contribute books as well, make sure to include a drop off location.
- Two weeks before the book drive ends, begin a countdown, e.g. “two weeks left. . . One week left. . . “

Step 4: After Your Book Drive

- The day after the book drive ends, remove the collection box and thank everyone involved with a sign at the collection site and with a message everywhere you have announced the project. Feature a grand total and sincere Thank You!
- Contact United Way of Northeast Florida’s ReadingPals coordinator at 904-390-3264 or madib@uwnefl.org to confirm where to drop off your collected books.

Book Donation Guidelines:

- ReadingPals serves three- to four-year-old children. Hardcover picture books with brightly-colored pictures and interesting stories are ideal.
- We are collecting both new and “gently-used” books. Gently-used books have the cover and pages intact, are clean and readable with no stains or coloring inside. Condition is very important.
- We are unable to accept the following:
 - Books about sensitive subjects like death, divorce, abuse, etc.
 - Books with any reference to religious worship, instruction or proselytization
 - Textbooks, encyclopedias, coloring books, magazines, out of date reference materials (e.g. atlas from 1992) and CDs, DVDs or videos.
- These guidelines have been developed out of respect for the children and families we serve as well as our philosophy that every child deserves quality, appropriate books.

ReadingPals connects passionate, committed volunteers with preschoolers who need a little extra help getting ready for kindergarten. Research shows reading aloud to children can help them develop into strong readers. Being a strong reader also improves students’ on-time grade promotion and increases high school graduation rates. For 30 minutes each week, a ReadingPals volunteer spends time with a pair of preschoolers, reading a book, completing activities, and developing skills that the children will need for success in school. Each child participating in the ReadingPals initiative also receives at least four books to help build their home library. For more information call 390-3200 or visit unitedwaynefl.org/readingpals

ReadingPals Partners are United Way Women United, United Way of Northeast Florida, Children’s Movement of Florida, Early Learning Coalition of Duval, Duval County Public Schools, Jacksonville Children’s Commission and the Jacksonville Public Library.