



Strong Start to reading™

"Making a difference in the life of a child"

December 2017

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When we ask ourselves 'why'

It is the "why" we do what we do that is the most important. We care about children and believe they deserve the best chance for healthy development, access to learning and a happy, successful life journey. If we can reach children when the greatest impact is possible, the chances are better that they will achieve those outcomes. Acquiring the essential life skill of reading is one of the great enablers for learning. Feeling part of a group, making friends and experiencing learning with a caring adult, helps build a child's confidence and improves self-esteem.

This is why Strong Start exists and why more than 2,400 caring volunteers gave 38,000 hours of their time last year. It is this shared belief that engages over 260 program partners to implement Strong Start programs in their schools and community centres. It is the passion for this work that inspires our talented team of dedicated staff and board members. It is the vision of an equitable, healthy and optimum learning journey for all children that moves our funders and donors to support the children in our programs with their generous gifts. To everyone involved, we extend our sincerest gratitude.

Observing the children in our *Get Ready for School™* program and seeing how much fun they have, how they have progressed in their learning, and how independent they have become is truly a joy. Their parents and caregivers are more engaged in their child's learning and feeling more relaxed and reassured that they, too, will be ready for school. Our assessment results and the notes we receive from the families let us know that together we are making a real difference.

Statistics tell us that one in four children struggles when learning to read. These are the children our trained Volunteer Coaches work with in our *Letters Sounds and Words™* program. With their teachers' help, we catch them early before they get discouraged. Why we do what we do is most important. To learn about what we do and how we do it, please give us a call or visit our website. We would welcome the opportunity to share more.

All the best,



Machelle Denison
Machelle Denison,
Executive Director



Steve Cameron
Steve Cameron,
Chair of the Board

Online

Detailed program results and stories can be found on our website:

www.strongstart.ca

Follow us on social media including Instagram @Strongstarttoreading



Thank you @Strong_Start for your amazing program! The progress from the 1st session to the last is phenomenal! Loved volunteering!

– Diane M @DiMayo24 via Twitter



Seeing Strong Start from the other side *Xander's story as told by his father, Joe Archer*



Letters, Sounds and Words

A Strong Start to reading program™



As a teacher and Site Co-ordinator for the *Letters, Sounds and Words* program, I have seen the benefits one-on-one attention makes for children who are struggling to read. Caring community members of all ages rally around our young learners to ensure they build skills and gain confidence. While I am passionate about the program at our school, this past year I experienced a

new side as a parent. My son, Xander, was enrolled in the Letters and Sounds strands.

Before the program, getting Xander to go to school was a huge struggle for our family. I think one of the fears he had was that he didn't feel capable, or even on par with the other children. He didn't want to look silly in front of them. That was really hard for us to take.

I did not expect what transpired and is still transpiring. He's gained confidence and self-esteem. He's developed a love of reading and writing. He's trying harder at school and producing better-quality work. This has truly benefited our whole family as he is now an example to his younger sisters, reading stories to them and helping them with their sounds.

The transformation I saw in Xander was remarkable. The program has empowered him to excel, become more confident with his reading and, as a direct result, his writing

"Xander is actively asking and driving us nuts at home, after hours, on weekends, at the rink, in the car, and everywhere in between, always wanting to read more and more and more!"

– Joe Archer, Xander's Father

has improved as well. He is more willing to go to school now. It's incredible to see the smile on his face when he's trying to solve a difficult word.

The program has lit up school for my son, and as a teacher that's the greatest gift.

Note: To watch the video version of this story, visit the "News" tab on our website: <http://strongstart.ca/videos/video-developing-a-love-of-reading-and-writing/>.

A tale of two sisters

Chloe and Georgia's story as told by their mother, Jennifer Quin



Get Ready for School*

A Strong Start to reading program™

* Based on the research of Dr. Juliana Baciu

Creating lifelong readers and learners is important to us. As a family of four, with a single income, paying for preschool simply wasn't an option. When Chloe (now 7) started the *Get Ready for School* program, it was a huge deal for her to attend. At the time, we lived in co-op housing, and I had a baby with me, Georgia (now 4).

When the first day of the program arrived, Chloe's transition was fine, but it wasn't easy for me. We had been hand-in-hand since she was born. I would joke with the other

parents that the program was getting me ready for school as much as it was preparing Chloe for her next adventure.

Over the 44 classes, she benefited in so many ways. She made friends and connections. She would come home clapping syllables and sounding out words. We were truly inspired by the progress she had made. When your child comes home and says they learned something elsewhere, it really sets you back in a wonderful way. You think, there's our "village" taking over and helping our daughter learn. That's what Strong Start and the *Get Ready for School* program is all about.

This past year, we put Georgia in the program. We had seen the benefits for Chloe and our entire family, and wanted Georgia to thrive as well. When September arrived, she was ready. She knew what to expect. She was confident. She was prepared.

The results of the *Get Ready for School* program are both measurable and

"Our daughters had the confidence to say they had gone to "school." It wasn't foreign to them walking into a classroom. They knew what to expect."

– Jennifer Quin, Chloe's and Georgia's Mother

immeasurable, in that the learning itself is invaluable. Chloe is in Grade 2 now and is a wonderful reader. Georgia is fitting in nicely to her new learning environment. The program provided an opportunity that our finances could not. But finances aside, you cannot buy anything like Strong Start, because there's nothing like it.

Note: To watch the video version of this story, visit the "News" tab on our website: <http://strongstart.ca/stories/video-a-tale-of-two-sisters/>.



Snuggle up and read

The special bond between parent and child



There are so many benefits to reading to babies – from encouraging early language and brain development to fostering imagination. But most of all, reading together creates a special bond between parent and child.

As a first-time mom and new to her Kitchener neighbourhood, Britlyn was looking for ways to be engaged in her community. She wanted to connect with other parents and give Rowan the

opportunity to socialize with other babies. After researching online, she came across the *Baby Connections*® program offered at the Kitchener Public Library's Country Hills branch. The program was delivered in six 30-minute sessions in which Britlyn sang songs and read stories with Rowan. She chatted with parents and even engaged with them in other baby programs offered in their neighbourhood. A new community and a new network for Britlyn had opened up.

While sharing books was already part of their routine, Britlyn learned additional tips to use at home and Rowan's love of books continued to grow. "It's a quiet and calm activity we can do together," Britlyn said. "Reading at this age can also be very interactive, with all the pictures, and asking questions like 'what's going to happen next'. It helps lay the groundwork for later perspective-taking." At nine months old, Rowan already has favourite books. "He plays with them, he opens them up, and he's starting to turn the pages," his mother said. "Reading is something very special we do

and I love spending that quality time with Rowan."

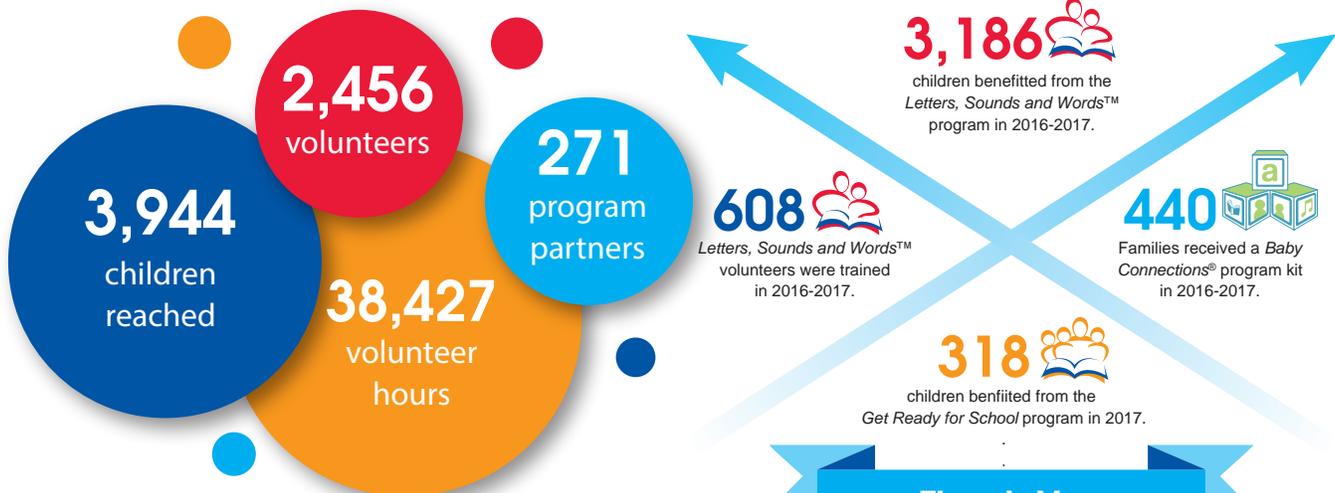
Each year, more than 440 families go through a *Baby Connections* program in sites across Waterloo Region. Whether they make new friends, build their support networks or engage with their babies in a meaningful way for maximum impact, the benefits of the program are endless. A lifelong love of reading and learning makes all the difference, and the earlier we start the better.

"We've built reading into Rowan's daily routine. We read to him before bed, throughout the day and in the evening when my husband gets home from work."

–Britlyn Pearce, Rowan's Mother



By the Numbers



The numbers above reflect the totals for the 2016-2017 program year for Letters, Sounds and Words™, Get Ready for School™ and Baby Connections®.



Thank You

To date Strong Start has reached over **34,109** children through **441,152+** volunteer hours, **25,186** volunteers and **YOUR** generous donations.

Thank you...

We couldn't do this without you.
Your financial support enables us to offer our quality programs.



LYLE S. HALLMAN
FOUNDATION



Josslin Insurance
a Real Insurance broker



Rotary Club of Brantford
Rotary Club of Brantford-Sunrise
Rotary Club of Cambridge North
Rotary Club of Kitchener
Rotary Club of Kitchener-Conestoga
Rotary Club of Kitchener-Westmount



Alex and Trish Brown Family Fund
Alex Schmidt Memorial Fund
Landmann Family Fund
Lonsdale and Roberta Schofield Fund
Smart & Caring Community Grants Program
The David and Eleanor Yach Family Fund
The International Plowing Match '95 & '12 Fund
The Spinnaker Fund
The TD Bank Financial Group Employees Endowment Fund
The Waterloo Region Record Literacy Fund
The Woolwich Community Fund - Funds for Distribution

Anonymous Fund
Berg Family Fund
Blasman Family Fund
Collins-Wright Family Fund
Daidy and James Flavelle Fund
Jane & Ken Wright Family Fund
Langdon Hall Fund
Preston Chapter IODE
Terry and Margaret Osbourne Family Fund
The Marion Edgar Fund



Community Fund for Canada's 150th

Thank you to all our financial and in-kind supporters

Your investment in helping young children read is making a lasting difference and will pay dividends now and in the future.

Corporate

Energy + Inc.
Giant Tiger
H.M Advisors
Investors Group
Meridian Credit Union - Galt Branch
Paul A. Bender Insurance
Sunlife Financial
TD Wealth

Clubs, Schools, Groups

ETFO - Waterloo Occasional Teachers' Local
I.L. Thomas School Community, Six Nations
Jarvis Public School
Kiwanis Club of Brantford
Kiwanis Foundation of Canada
K-W Montessori School
Lansdowne-Costain Public School
Lynndale Heights Public School
Maryhill Knights of Columbus
Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association - Waterloo Unit
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation - District 24
Retired Teachers of Ontario District 11
Retired Teachers of Ontario District 12
Tait Street Public School
Park Baptist Church Christian Couples Club
Walsh Public School
Wesley United Church
Westvale Public School, School Council

In-Kind Support

Arrowsmith Corporation
Brantford Blast Hockey Organization
Chris Howlett
Simpson Print
Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region
Westmount Moving & Warehousing

Foundations

Caledonia Community Foundation
Centre Wellington Community Foundation - Kathie Hammond Literacy Fund
D.H Gordon Foundation
Good Foundation Inc.
Samuel W. Stedman Foundation
The Excellence in Literacy Foundation
Waterford Community Foundation

Government

City of Cambridge
City of Kitchener

Third Party Events

Elmira Maple Syrup Festival
Mighty Machines

Peter Braid Celebration of Service
Peter Hallman Memorial Fast Pitch Tournaments
St. Andrew's United Church Quarter Charity Auction

Individuals

Anonymous (5)
Mark Augé
Ross Baird
Janet Baker
Nancy Barros
Cheryl Bauman
Ralph Beam
Rose Bettiol
James Bond
Katelyn Bricker
Graham Brown
Howard Budd
Steve & Patricia Cameron
Bruce Hicks & Catherine Brightling
Ron & Rita Cherkewski
Shirley Clairmont
Jillian Corry
Bill & Mary Cressman
Laura Crits
Megan DeMille
Tony & Mabelle Denison
David Derraugh
Chris Donnelly
Leo & Joan Doodchenko
Lewis & Inge Ford
Jeanne Foster
Paul & Dianne Gladding
Susan Gonzalez
Marguerite Gosen
Linda Gumble
Jim & Sue Hallman
Kim & Mike Heathcote
Karen Hewitt
Noreen Hishon
Karen Hodgson
Stephanie Hodgson
Karlee Holroyd
Diane Holtby
Elissa Jacobson
Carol Jankowski
Patti Johnson
Rosalind & Dieter Kays
Darlene Koebel
Pam Krokoszynski
Lucia & Matthew Kurucz
Owen Lackenbauer
Jeremy Levitt
Alyson Lindsay
Christine Loker
Bob & Gayle MacMillan
Carrie McGinnis
Philip McIntyre

Hulene Montgomery & Michael Graham
Angela Mick
Gary & Ruth Mills
Sharon Monteiro
Neville Monteith
Steve Morrison
Susanne Murdoch
Stan & Donna Nahrgang
Brandy Omand
Jesse Ottogalli
Katie Parkes
Tanya Perkins
Maria-Louise Petrella
Karen Pound
Christina Proctor
Brian Rainville
Bettina Rampelt
Sharada Ramsammy
Lois Reoch
David & Maureen Rich
Ross Robertson
Tracey Ruetz
Beverley & Stan Saliwonchuk
Susan Saunderson
Bob & Mieke Schroeder
Jocelyn Seeley-Baechler
Amy Sergi-Hammond
Sheila Serpa
Ken Silvester
Laura Siwak
Caitlin & Craig Smith
Shannon Smith
Teresa Sothern
Erin St. Denis
Angela Szijarto
Julie Taylor
Carrie Thomas
Louise Thompson
Ruthann Thwaites
Sarah Tosh
Amanda Vreeland
Brian Wadsworth
Connie & Tom Walker
Shannon Weber
Scott Williams
Joyce Wong

Memorial Gifts

Thank you for all memorial gifts received in memory of Ruth Clark, Eric Gawman, Rose Innes and Teresa Smid.

This list reflects gifts given between July 1, 2016 and November 17, 2017.



Strong Start to reading™
"Making a difference in the life of a child"

Neighbours helping neighbours

Fostering connected neighbourhoods and strong communities starts at home. As a top-quality builder, with properties in Brantford, Guelph, London and Waterloo Region, Sifton Properties invests where their staff and clients live, work and raise families. The Sifton Family



Stephanie Pullam and Jason Carman, Sifton Properties, present a \$20,000 cheque to Ruth Mills, Program Co-ordinator, Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk. Also pictured are staff members, a volunteer and student at Brier Park P.S..

Foundation, established in 1989 by Mowbray and Doris Sifton, has granted more than \$3.3 million to community organizations to date. With a specific focus on education and helping the next generation prepare for a successful future, our *Letters, Sounds and Words* program was a perfect fit with their neighbourly philosophy. Honouring Brier Park Public School in Brantford, which serves their tenants in the Brier Park community, was a wonderful way to support their local residents.

"Seeing first-hand what the *Letters, Sounds and Words* program, its volunteers, teachers and monetary grants are doing to make a profound impact on children is remarkable," said Stephanie Pullam, Customer Experience Manager – Residential Rentals. "This program doesn't just support literacy, it assists in building confidence in the lives of children. By moulding their young minds today, it will help to enhance their future of tomorrow."

Sifton's \$20,000 gift is helping fund the existing program and its expansion in Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk counties. Our thanks to the foundation for being good neighbours and community builders.

Growing Get Ready for School

Inspiring and growing individual and community potential is the mission of the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation. With a strong belief in prevention and early intervention initiatives, they invest in education, health and children's projects. As the Founding Benefactor of Strong Start, their continued support has helped expand our programs for greater impact.



LYLE S. HALLMAN
FOUNDATION

Growing *Get Ready for School* from two programs in 2011 to 16 in 2017, serving 1,290 families along the way (91.7% completing the entire program), was only possible because of their generous financial commitment.

Re-investing in our organization, the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation has made a two year core-funding commitment to *Get Ready for School*, with the goal of giving more children the best possible start to their learning journey. In 2018, the program will include a second class at Victoria Hills Community Centre in Kitchener, and welcome Stanley Park Community Centre as a new partner.

The goal for 2019 is to expand the program again to serve rural populations in the townships of Waterloo Region.

This grant was part of the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation's 2016 funding cycle in which they provided 14 multi-year grants totalling \$7,335,671 in support of children's initiatives across Waterloo Region.

Helping children have a chance for success

Locally owned and proudly Canadian TW Properties is committed to community involvement. The company began more than 35 years ago in Cambridge and has continued to grow, operating top quality industrial, office and warehouse properties across Cambridge, Guelph, Brantford, Ayr and surrounding areas.



With their progression has come increased financial and in-kind support to charities including the United Way Waterloo Region Communities, Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation, and local Christmas floats.

This year, TW Properties gave a generous donation to Strong Start because they care about education.

"We truly believe Strong Start offers an amazing program," said Dave Walden, owner of TW Properties. "It gives the children that need support most the opportunity to learn and develop essential literacy skills. Reading is the greatest gift you can give a child, opening up a world of possibilities and success in life."

Our thanks to TW Properties for supporting Strong Start, and important causes across Waterloo Region.

Community foundations rally to support children's literacy

At their heart, community foundations exist to support the needs of their citizens. They are hubs, which bring together the financial resources of community members and organizations to fund non-profits and charities that are making a difference for individuals of all ages.



Our vision of a community rallying around its children to help them learn to read has led to true and lasting partnerships with seven of these foundations across the regions we serve. Their continued investment in our *Letters, Sounds and Words* program in schools or our *Get Ready for School* program in community centres has helped inspire a new generation of readers.

With 191 community foundations across the country, we look forward to increased impact as we expand to new communities.

Thank you to the **Brant Community Foundation, Caledonia Community Foundation, Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation, Centre-Wellington Community**

Foundation, Guelph Community Foundation, The Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and Waterford Community Foundation, and their donors, for supporting children's literacy. We truly are better together.



Stronger together: Our program partners



Letters, Sounds and Words
A Strong Start to reading program™

- Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board
- Brantford Christian School
- Grand Erie District School Board
- I.L. Thomas Odadrihonyanita Elementary School
- International School of Cambridge
- Jamieson Elementary
- KidsAbility School
- Laurentian Hills Christian School
- Lloyd S. King School
- MAC Maple Grove School
- Oliver M. Smith Kawennio Elementary School
- W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Waterloo Region District School Board
- Wellington Catholic District School Board
- Conestoga College - Brantford
- Mohawk College
- Nipissing University
- Wilfrid Laurier University



- Cambridge Early Years Centre
- Carizon/Mosaic Counselling
- Family & Children's Services
- House of Friendship
- Idea Exchange (multiple branches)
- KidsAbility Centre for Child Development
- Kitchener Public Library (multiple branches)
- LINC English at First
- Our Place Family Resource and Early Years Centre (multiple locations)
- Project READ Literacy Network (multiple locations)
- Region of Waterloo Healthy Baby Healthy Children
- Region of Waterloo Infant Child Development Program
- Region of Waterloo Public Library (multiple branches)
- Waterloo Public Library (multiple branches)
- YMCA Early Years Centre (multiple locations)
- YMCAs of Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo
- YMCAs of Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo

Recognized for excellence

Strong Start receives Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce award

This was a wonderful year of recognition for Strong Start, our partners and volunteers. As an organization, we were honoured to receive the 2017 Greater Kitchener-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Award in the non-profit/charitable category. This recognition is for all of us as a community coming together to help young learners succeed.



Staff and board members celebrate Strong Start's Business Excellence Award at the 2017 Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards Gala this past Spring.



Get Ready for School®
A Strong Start to reading program™
* Based on the research of Dr. Maria Montessori

- Bridgeport Community Centre, Kitchener *
 - Centreville Chicopee Community Centre, Kitchener
 - Chandler Mowat Community Centre, Kitchener
 - Country Hills Community Centre, Kitchener *
 - Downtown Community Centre, Kitchener *
 - Grow Community Centre, Cambridge
 - Kids and I Resource Centre, Elmira
 - Kinbridge Community Association, Cambridge *
 - Kingsdale Community Centre, Kitchener *
 - Langs, Cambridge *
 - McCormick Branch Library, Waterloo *
 - Our Place Family Resource & Early Years Centre, Kitchener *
 - Preston Heights Community Group, Cambridge
 - Stanley Park Community Centre, Kitchener*
 - The Family Centre, Kitchener
 - Victoria Hills Community Centre, Kitchener *
 - Williamsburg Community Centre, Kitchener
- *sites also offering a Baby Connections® program*

Celebrating gifts of time

Time and expertise help make a difference in the lives of thousands of children



Staff, board members, friends and family celebrate the recognition of Steve Cameron and Chris Howlett at the Kitchener-Waterloo Volunteer Action Centre Volunteer Impact Awards in April. Steve and Chris each received awards for their significant contributions of time and expertise to Strong Start.

We are so grateful to the thousands of volunteers who generously give their time to help children learn to read. We know the one-on-one time a caring adult spends with a child is vital to the *Letters, Sounds and Words* program. Our *Get Ready for School* volunteers help staff ensure preschool children have a positive early learning experience and the many individuals and groups, including SAP, who package literacy materials at our warehouse and other locations, help keep our costs low. To all of you, we say a heartfelt "Thank You."

In April 2017, the contributions of two outstanding Strong Start volunteers were also recognized at the Kitchener-Waterloo Volunteer Action Centre's Volunteer Impact Awards. Chris Howlett won the Administrative Award for his work on SITE SOURCE™, our program database. Steve Cameron won the Outstanding Leadership Award based on his commitment to Strong Start's board, as well as the boards of other charitable organizations.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to both Chris and Steve on their awards and sincerely thank them for their commitment to our community. To read the full story, we invite you to visit the "News" tab on our website.

Make a gift today to help children learn to read

The vision of Strong Start continues to be one of communities rallying around their children with time and resources to help children learn to read. Please note that your gift can be designated to a specific program or community.

Please make a gift today to help set a child on a path for success:

Online: www.strongstart.ca

Cheque by mail: Strong Start Charitable Organization
20 Crestview Place, Kitchener, ON, N2B 0A2

Charitable Registration #825948060RR0001

Email: info@strongstart.ca

Call: 519-743-9578



Meet the Strong Start Team

Board of Directors:



Steve Cameron
Chair of the Board



Keith Martin
Board Member



Linda Fabi
Board Member



Mark Hallman
Board Member



Jennifer King
Board Member



Kimberley Hogan
Board Member

Team Members:



Machele Denison
Executive Director



Colette Moffat
Director of Program
& *Letters, Sounds and Words™* Program
Co-ordinator for
Wellington County



Caitlin Smith
Director of
Operations



Christina Proctor
Development and
Communications
Officer



Darlene Koebel
Program Support
Specialist



Susie Gamble
Warehouse
Co-ordinator



Iwona Dmitrienko
*Get Ready for
School™* Program
Co-ordinator



Kirsten Carr
*Get Ready for
School™* Program
Co-ordinator



Ruth Mills
*Letters, Sounds and
Words™* Program
Co-ordinator for
Brant, Haldimand
and Norfolk counties



Leslie Tinning
*Letters, Sounds and
Words™* Program
Co-ordinator for
Waterloo Region

Thank you to all our program staff and volunteers who deliver *Letters, Sounds and Words*, *Get Ready for School* and *Baby Connections*. We are so grateful for your enthusiasm and time to help children learn to read. We couldn't do this without you.



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