

Make Way for Books

books build brains
our year in review 2015-16

books build brains

Take a look to the right. What do you see? Pablo can't wait to explore that book!

Here's what you can't see—right now, 700 to 1,000 neural connections are happening in Pablo's brain, every second. These connections fire constantly up to age three when the majority of brain development occurs. When young children like Pablo are read to by caring adults, the result is a love of books. Reading to him works particular areas of his brain. The brains of children who are read to in the earliest years of life actually look and function differently than children who don't have meaningful interactions around books. These interactions help children develop language, literacy and cognitive skills. And Pablo's language skills at age three will determine whether he will start school ready, his IQ, and impact his future achievement. The latest science shows literacy and language experiences in the first three years of life are directly related to future outcomes in the core academic areas of reading, writing, and math. Most remarkably, science shows that these experiences impact how children will approach learning in kindergarten and beyond—their ability to concentrate, to engage, to solve problems, and their motivation to learn. **Starting early truly changes everything.**

Right now, one in three children in our community live in poverty. By age three, they've heard 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers. They often start school up to two years behind and struggle to catch up. By third grade, children who are below grade-level readers are four times more likely to drop out of high school. **Your support helps us rewrite this story.** Thanks to you, Make Way for Books is able to provide high-impact programs that ensure children have meaningful early learning experiences before they start kindergarten. Thanks to you, thousands of children gained access to more than 88,000 books this year and families learned how to use those books as a platform for the quality interactions that ensure children become successful readers and learners.

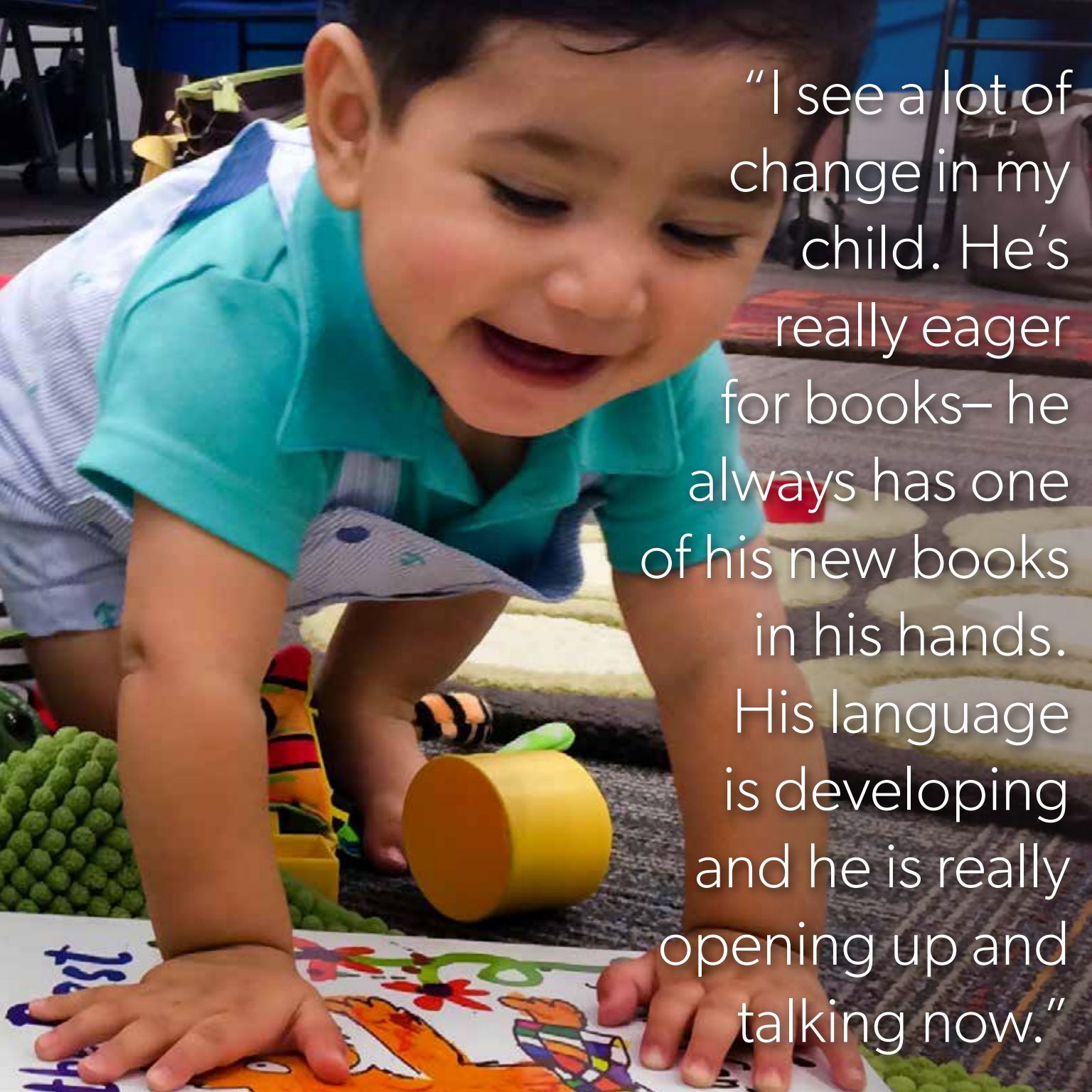
In 2015-16, we continued to innovate and build on the strength of families to create lasting impact for children. We created exciting new partnerships and reached a record number of children without access to high-quality early education. A team from Harvard recognized our innovative approach this year! It is all possible because of you. I invite you to read our annual report to see how you ensure that our youngest children are given the right start to begin kindergarten ready to read and on track for success in school and beyond.

With utmost gratitude,



Jenny Volpe, Executive Director
Make Way for Books

P.S. [Check out our video](#) to see how you are helping children reach their full potential!



"I see a lot of change in my child. He's really eager for books— he always has one of his new books in his hands. His language is developing and he is really opening up and talking now."

A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair and glasses, smiling. She is holding a book titled 'Caperucita Roja' and 'Little Red Riding Hood'. A woman with braces is smiling next to her. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a school or library setting.

Our mission is to
give all children
the chance
to read and
succeed.

our theory of change

We work to ensure that young children have meaningful early literacy experiences in the classroom and at home to ensure they develop the emergent literacy, language, and cognitive skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.



we build community

You have helped Make Way for Books grow for more than 18 years! With your support, we provided comprehensive early literacy programs in some of the highest need neighborhoods in southern Arizona. From rural communities like Ajo to metro areas like South Tucson, we impacted thousands of infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children by building relationships and meeting families where they are.

Our **Neighborhood School Readiness** approach is a coordinated effort to provide easy access to high-quality literacy and language experiences for all young children in the neighborhood—whether that child has access to preschool or not. The work is focused at and around neighborhood elementary schools that have low third grade reading scores and a high concentration of families in need. With this model, we impact more children who transition to kindergarten at their neighborhood school ready to read and succeed.

Thanks to you, more than 28,000 children participated in high-quality, evidenced-based early literacy programs at:



18 neighborhood elementary schools and district resource centers



174 low-resourced preschools, childcare centers, and family home-based care providers



57 neighborhood locations including low-income apartments and mobile home communities; social services offices like WIC, low-cost



health clinics, and community gathering areas like The Tanque Verde Swap Meet

And thanks to you, this year we started welcoming families into the new Make Way for Books building for programming every week.

"I think this program is helping my son reach the goals that we are striving for! One of the reasons we love coming so much is your staff. They are excellent at showing us techniques to work with our children..."





we build critical skills

With your support, Make Way for Books goes out into the community to reach thousands of children with high-impact early literacy programming. These experiences matter to parents like Ana Lucia. Ana's son Noah was born premature. As a result, he was behind other children in his development.

Through Make Way for Books programming, Ana was able to introduce Noah to a positive social environment where he could develop the emergent literacy, language, and social-emotional skills he needs to thrive. "When we were at our first session Noah was shy and did not want to go to other people; however he warmed right up to your staff and wanted to be with them all the time," shared Ana. "Now he is so excited to bring home his bag of books and when people come over he likes to drag his bag into someone's lap to have them read to him!"

Preliminary findings from a research team at the University of Arizona found that **children in Make Way for Books programming make significant gains and score well above national norms in vocabulary and across the board in early literacy and language skills.** These skills are the building blocks for future successful readers. In fact, children who develop critical literacy and language skills in the first five years have greater comprehension and reading achievement in later years.

99%

of children developed emergent literacy and language skills. 91% of children made significant gains in vocabulary skills this year.

"Thank you so much for providing this program. I feel like it has actually made me a better mom to my girls. Now I try to do activities like the ones we did in this program and I try to make the books more interesting when we read together."





we build on the strength of families

Parents are their children's first, best teachers. Like all parents, Marina wanted her young daughters to have a bright future but didn't know where to start, "I didn't know what to do with my kids," she shared, "so a lot of the time they would just be bored." Our Raising A Reader and Cover to Cover programs target the 4 out of 5 families like Marina's who do not have access to high-quality early education and preschool. Your support provides empowering, bilingual family literacy programming where Marina and her daughters learn together. Week after week, we show parents like Marina that they **already have what it takes** to help their children succeed in school and beyond.

Families learn about the science of how their child learns language and its connection to brain development. Parents learn that the number and quality of words they speak to their child literally builds the architecture of their child's brain and wires it for success. Marina learned how to share books effectively as a powerful platform to build her daughters' early literacy and language skills. She realized that by providing meaningful interactions around language and books, she was helping her daughters become future successful readers and learners. Families receive books and resources, like our free early literacy app, that help them transform their daily activities and routines into powerful learning opportunities.

Today, Marina feels confident that she has the tools to be her daughters' first, best teacher and she is inspired to do more! Marina shared, "Thank you. You guys inspire me to improve myself to be a better mom."

99%

of parents said they gained confidence and skills in supporting their children's literacy and language development. And 99% of families increased the time they spend reading and doing meaningful literacy activities together.

we build literacy-rich environments

Your support allows Make Way for Books to work with educators and families to **ensure that every adult in a child's life has the skills and tools to support their child's literacy and language development.** This year, The Story Project provided early literacy programming for more than 170 under-resourced preschools, childcare centers, and family home-based care providers. Throughout the year, educators participate in ongoing one-on-one coaching and workshops that empower them to provide quality interactions that build the literacy and language skills of children in their care.

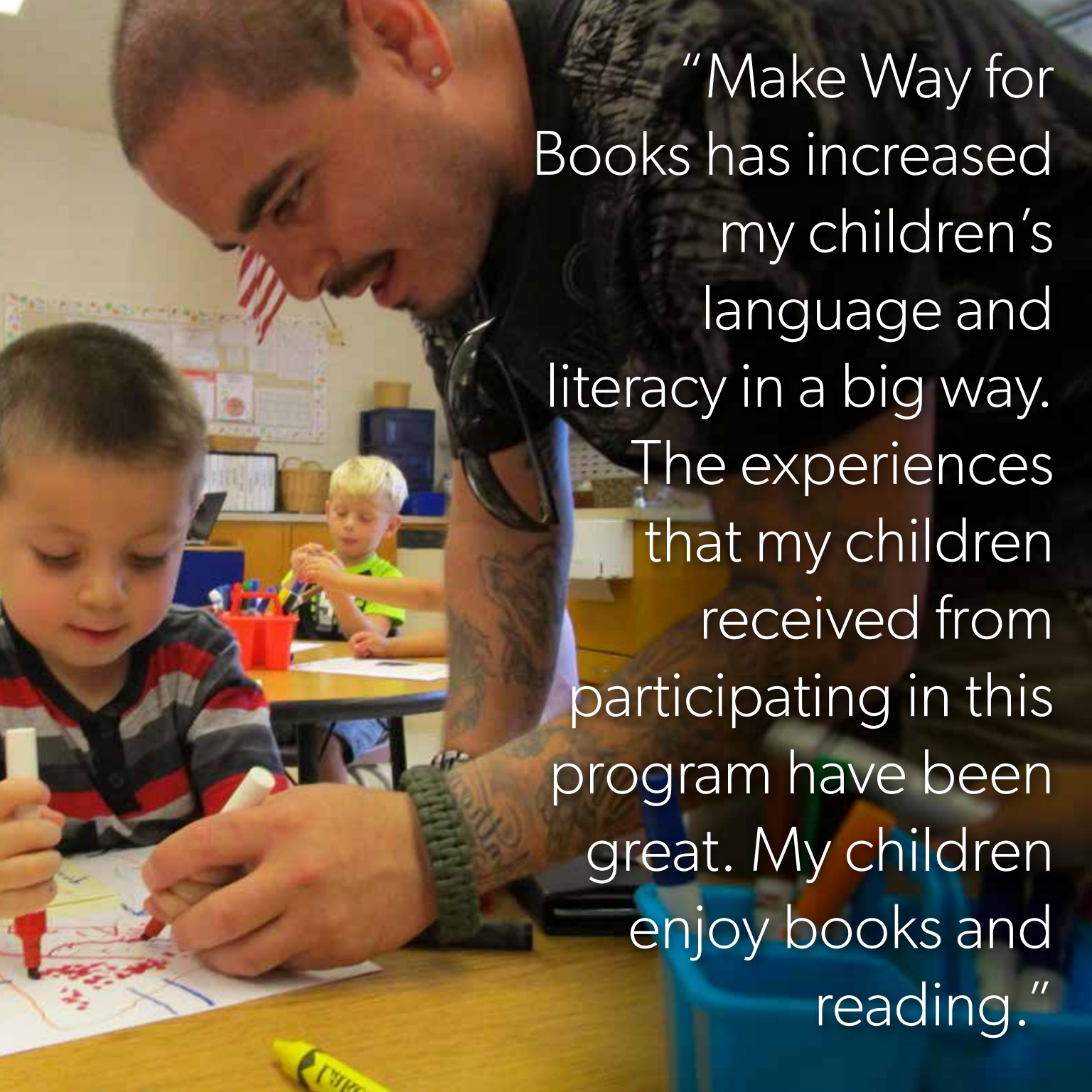
Access to books has more impact on a child's academic success than their parents education level or job. Yet, many childcare centers lack quality books and 2/3 of children in poverty do not have books at home. Your support provided high-quality books for children's classrooms and helped us create more lending libraries so that families could easily check out more books to share at home. Thanks to you, children also received books to keep and start their very own collection of favorite stories. To enhance a culture of literacy in the classroom, each week, Storytime Volunteers visited classrooms to provide interactive storytimes that help children fall in love with books.

All children deserve the opportunity to fall in love with books. And, all children should be able to see themselves and their culture reflected in the books they read. When these books don't exist, we create them. This year it meant working to create photo books to reflect children of the Tohono O'odham Nation as well as collaborating with the Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind to create large, textured braille books for families with visual impairments.

92%

of educators said their classrooms were significantly more literacy and language-rich and 100% said they gained skills to better support children in their care.





"Make Way for Books has increased my children's language and literacy in a big way. The experiences that my children received from participating in this program have been great. My children enjoy books and reading."

"I learned a lot about how to read books to my child, not only to read, but to stop and ask questions—to give my child the opportunity to develop their imagination and ways of thinking. Thank you."





we build on the latest science

We believe in empowerment. Everyone has what it takes. Our programs teach families about the science of literacy, language, and brain development. We know that when parents gain knowledge, skills, and confidence, they are incredible agents of change in their children's lives. With your help, we are partnering with parents to transform the lives and futures of thousands of children in our community. Your investment in creativity and innovation allowed us to build on the latest science and research to find new ways to create lasting impact for children.

This year, we piloted Make Way for Kindergarten, a strategy that builds on our work with infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children. Research shows that a smooth transition to school increases the likelihood of children's positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes in the school years to come. Through focus groups with kindergarten teachers, we created a new strategy to help children develop the skills teachers need them to have on the first day of school. Because of you, we can leverage meaningful partnerships and provide new technologies for families. This year, we partnered with Stanford University Center for Policy Analysis to provide Ready4K!, an evidence-based texting program that helps parents maximize their daily routines to help prepare their children for kindergarten.

As you know, our strength-based work has impacted families and communities throughout southern Arizona for more than 18 years. This year, we began teaching other organizations about our effective approach. We worked with communities and groups from the east to west coast to help them learn from our model and best practices. We are proud that what we have built here could inform the work of others also working to improve the early literacy outcomes for children in Ohio, Connecticut, Oregon, and Florida!

35,106

children and families were impacted by Make Way for Books programs this year, all thanks to you.

From the 400 volunteers who helped us achieve our mission this year...



to the children who collected books instead of birthday gifts...



to the generous gifts of our friends and supporters...

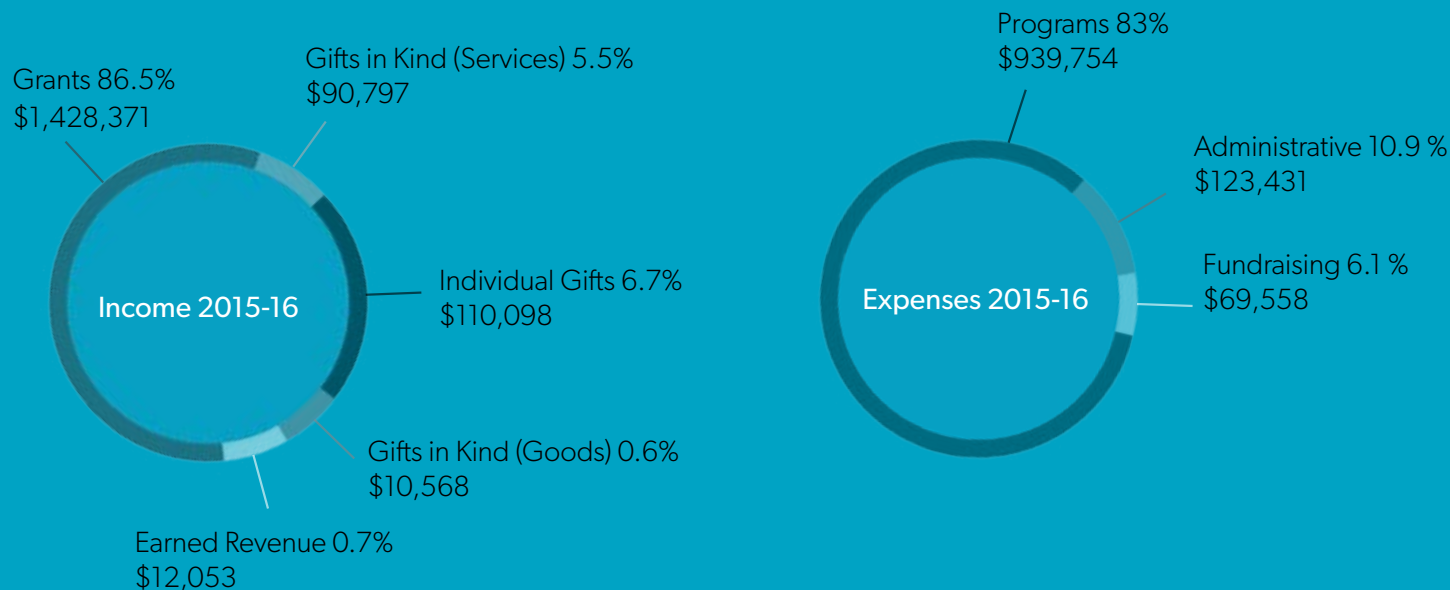


Thank you! We truly rely on your support to build a community where all children can thrive!

You build brighter futures for our youngest children

By giving our youngest children the right start today, you ensure they start school ready to read and on-track for future grade-level reading, and academic success. Most of all, you help children reach their fullest potential. Thank you.

Our 2015-16 Financials



Make Way for Books received a generous grant in the amount of \$492,700 from Angel Charity for Children to pay off the mortgage on the building at 700 N. Stone Ave. in 2015-16.

Thank you to our incredible friends,
supporters, donors, and the more
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us achieve our mission this year. We
truly rely on your support!

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