

Project R.E.A.D. AmeriCorps: Helping a Child Read to Succeed

For the 2015-2016 school year, 54.5% of first graders and 51.3% of second graders in Guilford County could not read at grade level. Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA), taking notice of these alarming statistics, developed Project R.E.A.D (Reading Early Advances Development) with the focus of increasing the number of Guilford County children reading by third grade.

An AmeriCorps grant from North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service in the Office of Governor Roy Cooper will enable GHA to begin Project R.E.A.D literacy programs in nine affordable housing communities throughout Greensboro. AmeriCorps is a Federal program that engages adults in public service with the expressed goal of helping others and meeting critical needs in the community.

Studies show that reading by third grade is an important milestone. Until third grade, children are learning to read; however, once a child enters fourth grade, they must apply their reading skills in order to solve problems and think critically about their subjects. Combined with low socio-economic status, the achievement gap is widening and can be seen even before a child reaches kindergarten. Project R.E.A.D AmeriCorps aims to lessen these roadblocks with programming for specific age groups. For children zero to two and their parents, the program, *Raising a Reader* (RAR), will provide group reading activities at nine GHA sites for 20 weeks. *Pre-K Kindergarten Readiness* is a program that will cater to three and four year olds, providing tutorial activities at nine GHA sites for 47 weeks. *The K-3 Read to Achieve* program will then focus on Kindergarten through third grade students and offer group and one-on-one tutoring. It will run for 36 weeks throughout the school year and continue to offer reading programs as well as STEM activities throughout the summer months. Each of the interventions are based on programs with proven track records of measurable gains in literacy, vocabulary and comprehension skills.

GHA is in the process of recruiting AmeriCorps members and volunteers. All members and volunteers will receive training and supervision from qualified staff. AmeriCorps members may be eligible to receive a living allowance or an education award that can be used toward qualified student loans. Members age 55 and up, can elect to have the education award transferred to a child or grandchild. If interested, please call GHA at 336-275-8501 and ask about the Project READ AmeriCorps opportunity and help a child read to succeed.

