



# CONNECT

THE READ TO ME! NEWSLETTER  
FALL 2010

## DID YOU KNOW?

Read to Me!  
gives a  
free bag of books  
to every baby  
born or adopted  
in Nova Scotia

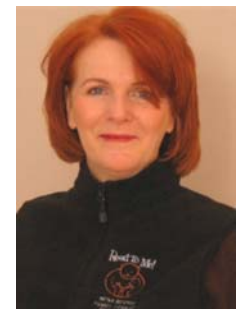
To date,  
Read to Me!  
has given out  
67,300  
bags  
containing over  
172,000  
high quality  
baby books to  
families!

## Message from the Director

*Read to Me!* was excited to sit down recently with students Deirdre O'Reilly and Naomi Balla-Boudreau who worked diligently over the summer conducting the **National Survey of Early Literacy Programs**, a joint project of *Read to Me!* and Dalhousie University's Information Management School. The students were successful in collecting data from 58 early literacy programs, covering all provinces and territories in Canada. The survey results provide an important snapshot of the work being done in early literacy across the country, as well as identifying gaps in programming and resources. Programs surveyed included library baby programs, provincial book gift programs and a hospital-based program in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

A first look at the data shows interesting themes emerging around funding, staffing and resources. Sustainable long-term funding was identified as an ongoing challenge by the majority of programs. Analysis of funding sources showed most funding comes from local and provincial sources, and there was little national funding support. Finding skilled staff was another common challenge and many programs noted that although they felt research was important, they did not have the time, funding or skills to commit to research and evaluation of their programs.

I want to thank all of the groups who took the time to fill out the on-line survey. Survey results will be sent to all participating groups, and will also be posted in early December on our website at [www.readtome.ca](http://www.readtome.ca). I believe this survey is an important first step towards bringing early literacy practitioners together to strengthen our work and build a more literate Canada.



## Around the Province with the People Who Make *Read to Me!* Possible

Each year, we travel to hospitals across Nova Scotia to meet with the many dedicated people who make *Read to Me!* possible. These visits give us an opportunity to introduce new program materials, provide research and program updates, as well as get to know the great group of people who make our program run so successfully across Nova Scotia.

This summer we travelled the province visiting all eleven hospitals delivering the program. At each site we were pleased to talk with the volunteers, nurses and ward clerks who give the bags to families, as well as the librarians in each region who help us transport the bags to each local hospital, and provide programs and reading resources to new families. Without them, *Read to Me!* simply would not exist. This dedicated group is the reason we are able to reach 99.1% of the babies born in Nova Scotia. This year, we loved hearing about their experiences delivering the bags -many told us about the wonderful responses they hear when they give the book bag to parents at the hospital bedside, while others mentioned how fulfilling it is to share the joys of reading with families at such a pivotal time in their lives.

### Babies and Toddlers Entertained at "An Afternoon Tea with Sheree Fitch"

A full house of babies, toddlers and adults were dazzled and entertained by Read to Me! Honorary Spokesperson Sheree Fitch at a special event held at the Pictou Antigonish Regional Library (PARL). Sheree talked about the importance of reading together and read from her children's books in the library's new program room, which was beautifully decorated with flowers and china tea cups by PARL Assistant Supervisor and Read to Me! volunteer, Carmieta Dennis. A reception of tea, lemonade and sweets followed the reading.



Sheree talks about the importance of reading to babies  
Photo courtesy of The News, New Glasgow, July 2010.

### Special Thanks To ...

*Read to Me!* serves families at all 11 hospitals that offer maternity services in Nova Scotia. Hospital auxiliaries across the province have been instrumental in helping to support our program. Special thanks to the following auxiliaries who have made generous donations to strengthen early literacy in their community:

**Aberdeen Health Foundation**  
**Cape Breton Regional Hospital Foundation**  
**Colchester Regional Hospital Auxiliary**  
**IWK Health Centre Auxiliary**  
**South Shore Regional Hospital Auxiliary**  
**Women's Auxiliary of the Yarmouth Regional Hospital**

### Subaru - Helping to Drive Literacy Home

We would like to take this opportunity to thank **Dexter Subaru** and **Subaru Canada**, who, for the past six years, have donated the use of a Subaru Legacy, affectionately known as 'the Readmobile' to our program. Their support has allowed us to travel the province supporting early literacy in communities across Nova Scotia.





## Hey Diddle Diddle!– A Soundtrack for Baby's Day

Since our CD *Hey Diddle Diddle!* was released in January 2010, we have received numerous glowing emails and letters from families who have made it a soundtrack for their baby's daily routine.

Parents are telling us how much they love the extraordinary quality of the music and the selection of songs on the CD, which range from bopping baby songs to soothing lullabies. Many parents have also told us how many of the songs have become essential tools to help their baby make transitions during the day. We are thrilled that families are enjoying this important new *Read to Me!* resource and that it is becoming an indispensable classic in many homes.

To Whom It May Concern,

My husband and I received your wonderful bag of goodies on June 1st, the day after our daughter was born. We immediately looked through the books and merely glanced at the CD. We read the stories to our daughter, but completely forgot about the CD for days.

About a week after she was born, we had to take a long drive, and my husband remembered the CD. He grabbed it and we tossed it in our CD player in the car.

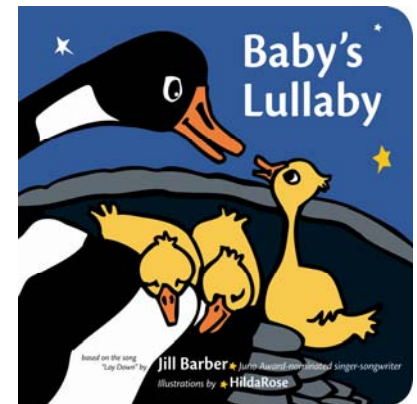
I must admit, we didn't expect to like it. We had received other baby CDs and they just weren't something we enjoyed. But both of us were floored at how excellent the music and songs were put together. We were even more surprised when we discovered it was entirely local artists. My parents, who love the Songwriter's Circles and Stanfests, knew all but one artist on the compilation. We were especially tickled with "*Monsters Love Banana Bread*" by George Canyon. We were also impressed with the diversity of cultural instruments and languages involved. I especially enjoyed the lullaby sung in the native dialect.

This CD was a delightful hidden gem amongst other jewels we discovered in our little yellow bag. Our daughter will get much enjoyment from these gifts, as will any subsequent siblings that might come along.

Nada, Michael and Baby Naomi

## And in Related News ...

*Read to Me!* is excited to announce that one of the songs from our CD has been published as a new board book for babies. Nimbus Publishing has recently released *Baby's Lullaby*, a bedtime board book by award-winning singer-songwriter Jill Barber. The book is based on Jill's original song, "*Lay Down*", which she had written for our CD. This beautiful book is illustrated by Hilda Rose, and features vibrant and tender images of babies, both human and animal, as they get ready to go to sleep.



Even though you can't buy our CD in stores, when you purchase a copy of Jill's book, you will receive a code to download a free electronic copy of the song so that you can enjoy both the book and song together.

If you are in Halifax on Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am, drop by Chapters Mic Mac Mall to hear Jill do an acoustic performance and sign copies of *Baby's Lullaby!*

## Read to Me! Provides Books in More Languages!

Read to Me! currently provides bags with resources in English, French Arabic, Chinese and Mi'kmaw.

Lori Kennedy, who delivers the bag to families at the IWK Health Centre, where more than half of the babies in the province are born, has recently noted a marked increase in requests for books in other languages. While it is impossible to stock resources in every language, we have sourced baby books in the specific languages requested most by families, including **Spanish, Russian, Turkish, Bengali, Urdu, Vietnamese, Punjabi and Italian.**

Lori has told us: "Parents are so appreciative and excited when I offer them a book for their baby in their own language."

The selected books are dual-language versions of Annie Kubler's *Head Shoulders Knees and Toes* and *Row Row Row your Boat*.

## Now Available For Sale:

Read to Me! A Month by Month Guide to Reading with Your Baby in the First Year

Our popular and easy to use Family Reading Guide is filled with tips, activities and book suggestions that help support reading development and encourage bonding and attachment in the first year. Individual copies of the guide can be purchased online at [www.chapters.indigo.ca](http://www.chapters.indigo.ca).

For information on purchasing bulk orders for programs, please contact Terrilee Bulger at Nimbus Publishing: [tbulger@nimbus.ns.ca](mailto:tbulger@nimbus.ns.ca)



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## About Read To Me!

Read to Me! is a non-profit, province-wide early literacy program developed to help families enrich their child's early years with books and reading. We present parents with a bright yellow bag of books and literacy resources at the hospital bedside within 24 hours of the birth of their baby. The program is delivered at 11 hospitals in Nova Scotia that offer maternity services, reaching every baby born or adopted in the province.



## What's in the bag?

Each bag contains:

- 3 High Quality Baby Books
- The Family Reading Guide
- *Hey Diddle Diddle!* CD
- Information about local library programs

### Founding Partners:



### Vehicle Sponsor:

