



MASSACHUSETTS

# ANNUAL REPORT FY 2025

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Dear Supporters,

Literacy is a fundamental human right and an essential foundation for personal, economic, and professional success throughout life. Early literacy, especially access to books and other educational materials, is critical because it provides the educational cornerstone children need before entering school. Without this foundation, many children begin behind their peers and must work significantly harder to catch up; for too many, this gap becomes a barrier they are never able to overcome.

For nearly 20 years, Raising a Reader Massachusetts has worked to fulfill our mission: to close the literacy opportunity gap among children from birth to age six in under-resourced communities by helping families develop and practice shared home reading habits. During that time, we have grown to serve more than 20 communities across Massachusetts in partnership with over 110 early education and community-based organizations. While we are proud of this progress, our work is far from finished.

The urgency remains clear. The most recent MCAS results show that 58% of Massachusetts third graders are not meeting reading expectations, and in some of the communities we serve, that number rises to as high as 86%. These disparities reflect persistent inequities, with children in low-income communities disproportionately affected, and outcomes are still behind pre-COVID (2019) levels. This is unacceptable, particularly in a state that prides itself on educational excellence. Too many children are entering school already behind, with consequences that can shape their academic trajectories and life opportunities for years to come.

In FY 2025, we continued to work collaboratively with our partners to ensure families received the early literacy supports their children need to be on a path toward lifelong success and building early literacy and critical thinking skills that open doors to future opportunity. Whether in our longest-standing community of Chelsea or in newer communities such as Holyoke, the impact of Raising a Reader Massachusetts is evident in the data, in family engagement, in measurable outcomes, and in the powerful stories and feedback we hear from parents and caregivers, children, educators, and partners.

We are excited to share highlights from the past year in this report, showcasing the life-changing impact of our work. None of this would be possible without the generosity of our donors, the deep collaboration of our partners, and the dedication of our staff. We are incredibly proud of our team and our community. As we look to the future, we are confident that, together, we will continue to achieve even more for the children and families of Massachusetts.

A strong foundation early in life opens the door to future opportunity, from higher graduation rates and better jobs to reduced reliance on social services. Thank you for your partnership and support as we work to ensure that every child can thrive.

With gratitude,



Christine Ward, Executive Director



Mercedes Dahar, Board of Directors Chair

**"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."**

- Nelson Mandela

# OUR MISSION & COMMUNITIES

Our mission is to close the literacy opportunity gap among children birth to age six in under-resourced communities by helping families develop and practice shared home reading habits.

We provide families with the knowledge and resources to feel empowered as active participants in their child's education, having already succeeded as their child's first teacher.

Our programs create a love of reading, change family/caregiver behavior, and strengthen family reading culture to improve kindergarten readiness.



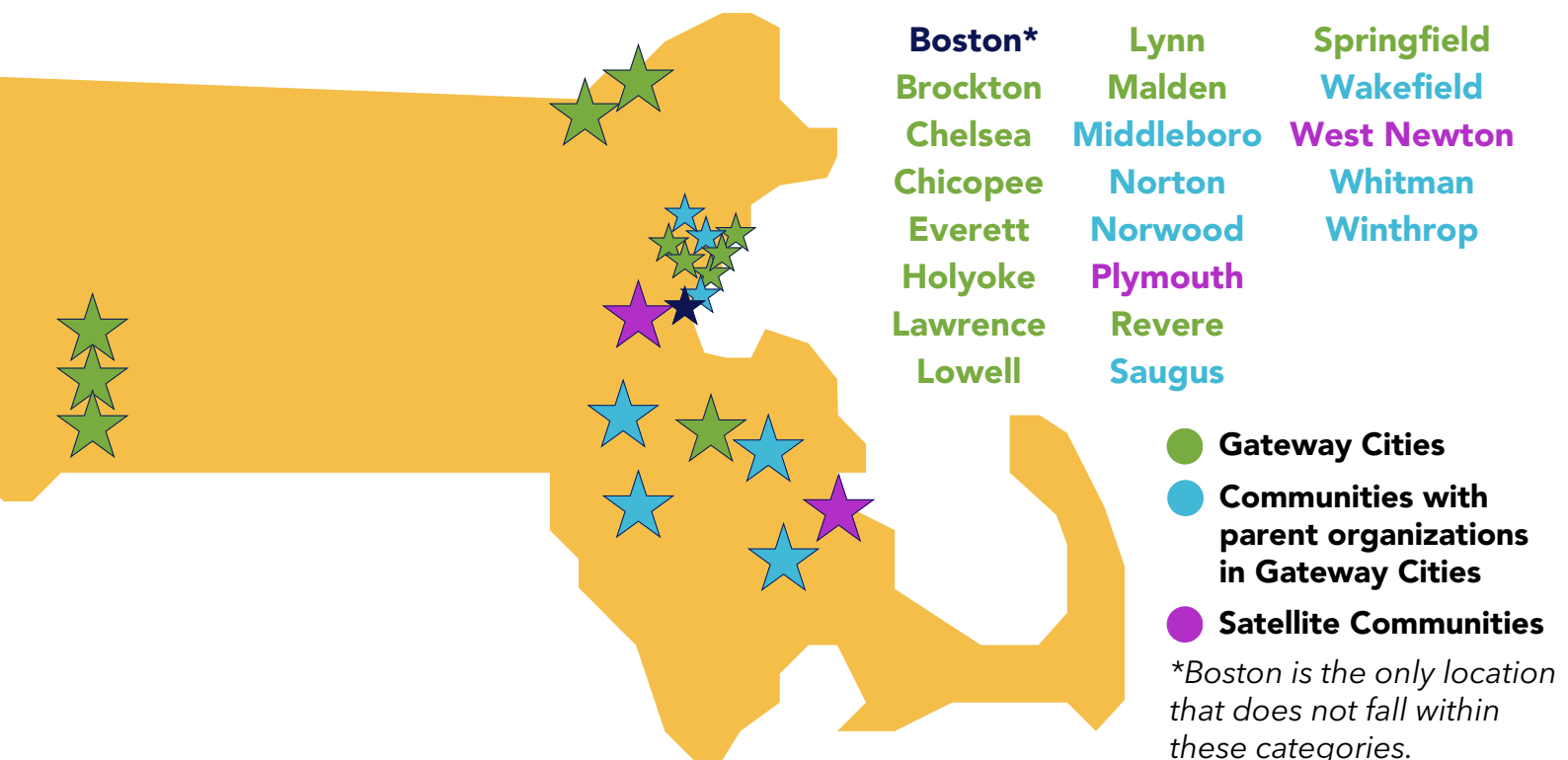
## COMMUNITIES WE SERVE:

Our dedicated Program Team staff members are located across the state and each possess a deep understanding of the local community. Each team member works with program implementer staff to determine the best way to conduct the book rotation and parent/caregiver workshops. Access to age-appropriate, high-quality books (in 13 different languages) combined with coaching parents/caregivers on how to best engage children in books results in an increase in reading frequency, quality, and ultimately, kindergarten readiness.

We work with partners located in Boston, 11 Gateway Cities\*, seven communities with parent organizations in those Gateway Cities (Middleboro, Norton, Norwood, Saugus, Wakefield, Whitman, and Winthrop), and two satellite communities (West Newton and Plymouth).

Through our satellite model, RAR-MA offers a tailored train-the-trainer approach for organizations located outside of our core communities.

*\*Gateway Cities are midsize urban centers that anchor regional economies around the state. - MassINC*



# SPOTLIGHT ON GREATER BOSTON

Every year we survey a specific area we serve, and our FY 2025 Family Survey focused on the Greater Boston Area. This geographic cohort approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the local impact and benefits to families.

## WHO DID THIS SURVEY COVER?

25% response rate (609 responses) in the Greater Boston region with 2,462 children served.

## PRIMARY LANGUAGE AT HOME



English



Spanish



Other

Average Age of Children Served:  
5 Years Old



95%

...of families now have a routine for looking at books with their children.



96%

...of children served now ask to look at books at least five times per week.

"It is incredibly helpful to hear from instructors on reading, the reminders each week keep info fresh to use during the week and take home sheets are referenced often. It's reassuring to share experiences with other parents in the process. We love this program and my little one loves exploring reading even more now."

- RAR-MA Caregiver



"I have always valued reading and books but having a nonverbal child I now know it's so much more important for us to have this communication and my child's ability to identify by pictures and understand the meaning of words."

- RAR-MA Caregiver



# OUR IMPACT

The impact of our work can be seen in each child, caregiver, and partner who takes part in the RAR-MA program in communities throughout Massachusetts. In FY 2025, we reached over 7,200 children and families, helping to eliminate the cycle of low literacy as we work to build a lifelong love of literacy through family engagement.



Families participating in Raising a Reader MA programs in FY 2025 reported increases in shared reading sessions per week and minutes of shared reading per session that can project to an annual increase of...



## How is this metric calculated?\*

$(\text{Children served}) \times [(\text{Current Average Shared Reading Session Length in Minutes} \times \text{Current Average Shared Reading Sessions per Week} \times 52)] - (\text{Previous Average Shared Reading Session Length in Minutes} \times \text{Previous Average Shared Reading Sessions per Week} \times 52)]$

\* Resulting numbers are rounded for ease of reading.



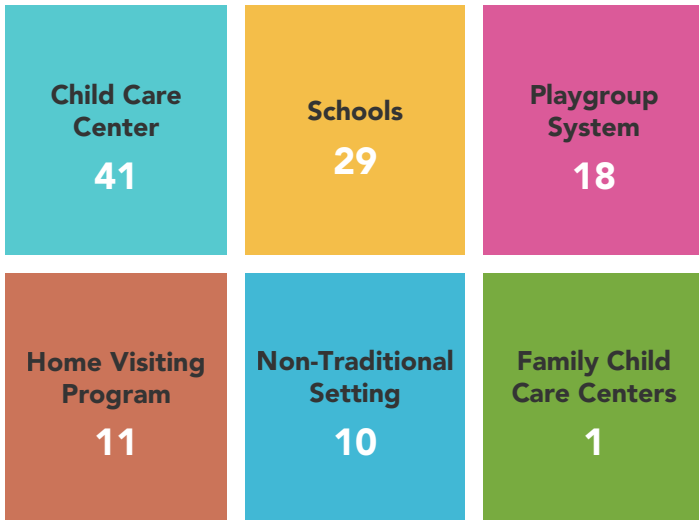
"I've learned different ways to keep my child engaged while reading books. I also enjoy that these lessons validate some of the practices I already do while reading. It also helped highlight to me the benefits to their development by continuing these practices."  
- RAR-MA Caregiver

# PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

We reach families including parents, caregivers, and their children through trusted community partners. We work with over 100 partner implementers in under-resourced communities across Massachusetts.

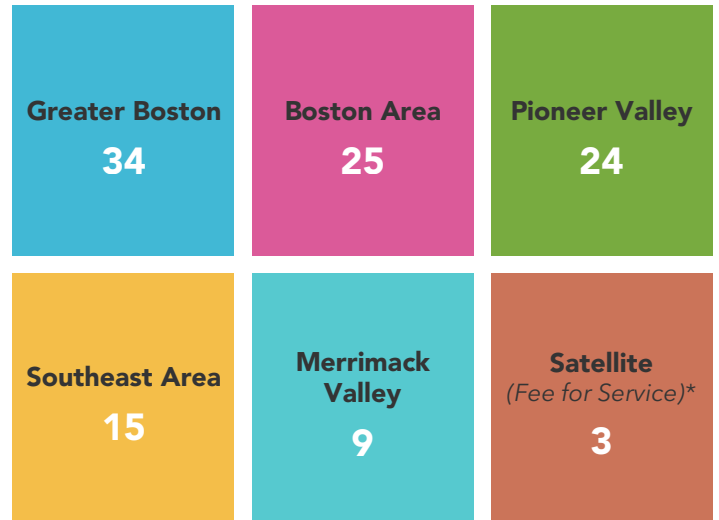
## Number of Partners by Type

FY 2025



## Number of Partners by Region

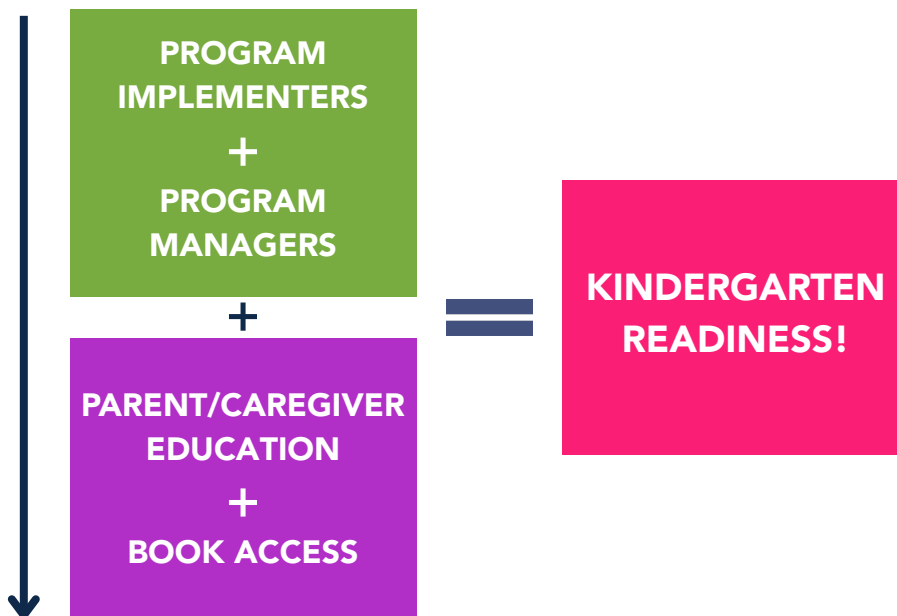
FY 2025



*\*Through our satellite model, RAR-MA offers a tailored train-the-trainer approach for organizations located outside of our core communities.*

## DUAL INTERVENTION MODEL

With our program implementers, we teach families dialogic reading strategies to effectively engage children in interactive reading that supports healthy brain development. We also provide age-appropriate and culturally relevant books through our weekly book bag rotation.



"I always enjoy working with RAR-MA because they always support the home visitors and their efforts to spread literacy ideas and lessons for families in their home and also the support they give when it comes to attending and helping with socializations."  
- RAR-MA Program Partner



# 2025 DINNER WITH AN AUTHOR

Our signature fundraiser, Dinner with an Author Gala, was held on May 8, 2025, at The Newbury Boston. The event provided attendees with a unique opportunity to engage with 23 best-selling authors while gaining insights into the vital connection between STEM education and early literacy from Tim Ritchie, President of the Museum of Science. We also highlighted the impact of our work by hearing from Victor Silva, a Raising a Reader MA parent, and Kiss 108's Lisa Donovan received our Literacy Champion Award.

The evening concluded with a lively auction, raising unrestricted funds to support our programs where they are needed most. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we raised over \$400,000 in unrestricted funds.

We are deeply grateful to our 230 guests, 23 authors, 24 sponsors, and 34 in-kind donors. Along with our dedicated Gala Committee and Host Committee, Board, and volunteers, the entire Raising a Reader Massachusetts team came together to celebrate a shared love of books, making this incredible evening a success and furthering our mission to close the literacy opportunity gap.



## Dinner with an Author Featured Authors & Guest Speakers

Ace Atkins  
Christy Cashman  
Billy Costa  
Andre Dubus III  
Lisa Genova  
David Kaiser  
Crystal King  
Jeff Kinney

Shannon Kirk  
Dallas Lawrence  
Nicole Lipson  
William Martin  
Claire Messud  
Ben Mezrich  
Tonya Mezrich  
Colette Phillips

Hank Phillippi Ryan  
Dan Shaughnessy  
Laura Tillman  
Dawn Tripp  
Karen Winn  
James Wood

Honoree: Lisa Donovan  
Keynote Speaker: Tim Ritchie  
Guest Speaker: Victor Silva

## THANK YOU!

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

## LISA'S BOOK CLUB

Since January 2023, Lisa and her community have been a transformative force for Raising a Reader MA. To date, Lisa's Book Club has raised over \$25,000, mobilized more than two dozen book clubs, and championed over 25 authors in support of our mission. Through a vital partnership with Book Ends in Winchester, this collaboration has placed more than 4,000 'Forever Books' directly into the hands of our families, creating thousands of new home libraries across the Commonwealth.

Lisa's Book Clubs are a wonderful way to gather with community and spread awareness about the importance of early literacy, all while raising the critical funds needed to ensure every family has access to books in the home.



## PARTNERSHIPS

In FY 2025, we were excited to receive financial and volunteer support from organizations throughout Massachusetts to further our mission. They included:

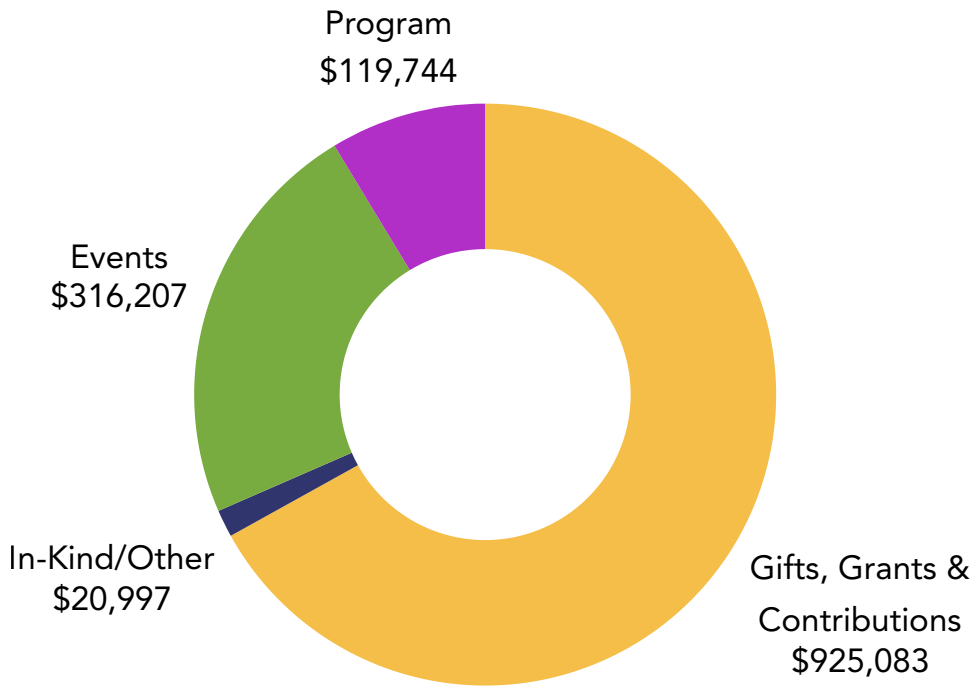
- Book Ends Winchester
- Direct Federal Credit Union
- Deloitte
- Praxis Precision Medicines
- Target Circle™

There were many others, and our work would not be possible without the community support we receive!

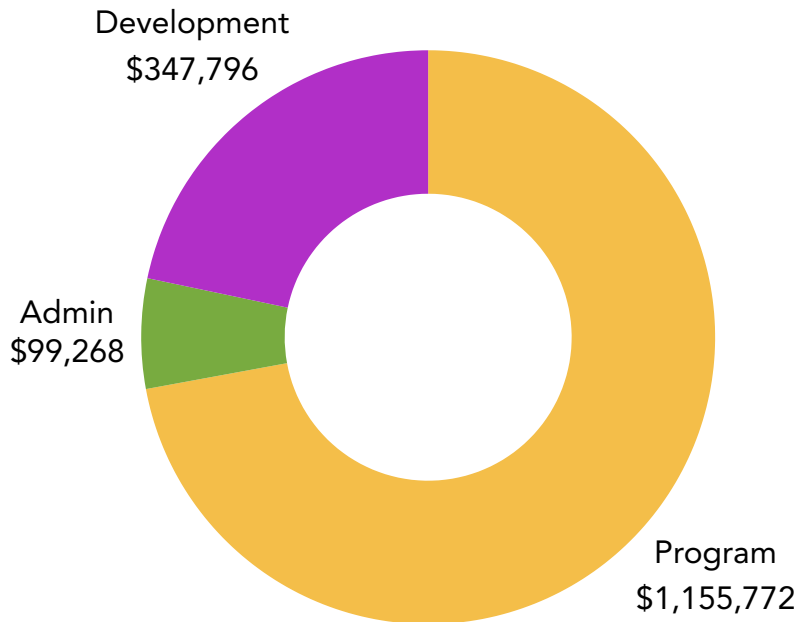


# FY 2025 FINANCIALS

## Revenue \$1,382,031



## Expenses \$1,602,836



"It was clear that the program sparked curiosity and joy around reading, not only in the classroom but also at home. I appreciated how RAR-MA helped foster stronger connections between families and literacy. It was rewarding to hear from parents who shared that reading together became a more consistent and enjoyable part of their routines."

- RAR-MA Program Partner



# OUR LEADERSHIP

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## Community Advisors to the Board

Jeanette Velez - Director of Family & Community Services, Everett Public Schools

Lilliana Tirado Arteaga - Boston Community Hub School Coordinator, Umana Academy

## EMERGING LEADERS BOARD

The Emerging Leaders associate board is a mixture of young and mid-level career professionals who regularly take action to raise awareness and funds for our core mission and develop into future leaders.

Annie Ladinsky (Chair)

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Mikaela Alioto

*Content Marketing Manager, Valora*

Sabrina Bauer

*Regional Marketing Manager, New England Marketing, VHB*

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*Senior Consultant, Deloitte & Touche LLP*

Amanda DiMatteo

*Of Counsel, Peabody & Arnold LLP*

Maeve Foley

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Emily Leinbach

*Senior Manager, Global & Social Impact Marketing (Sustainability Practice), Bain & Company*

Joshua Zeff

*Senior Manager, CFGI*

**"It helped my child to explore new books and love of reading"  
- RAR-MA Caregiver**



# OUR DONORS

## **\$50,000 and More**

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Liberty Mutual Foundation  
Paul and Kristen Reeder  
The Philanthropic Initiative

## **\$20,000 - \$49,999**

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Ropes & Gray LLP  
Anne Schelle and William Hanlon  
The Charlotte Home  
Town Fair Tire Foundation

# OUR DONORS

United Way of Greater Plymouth County  
Mikel Weiss

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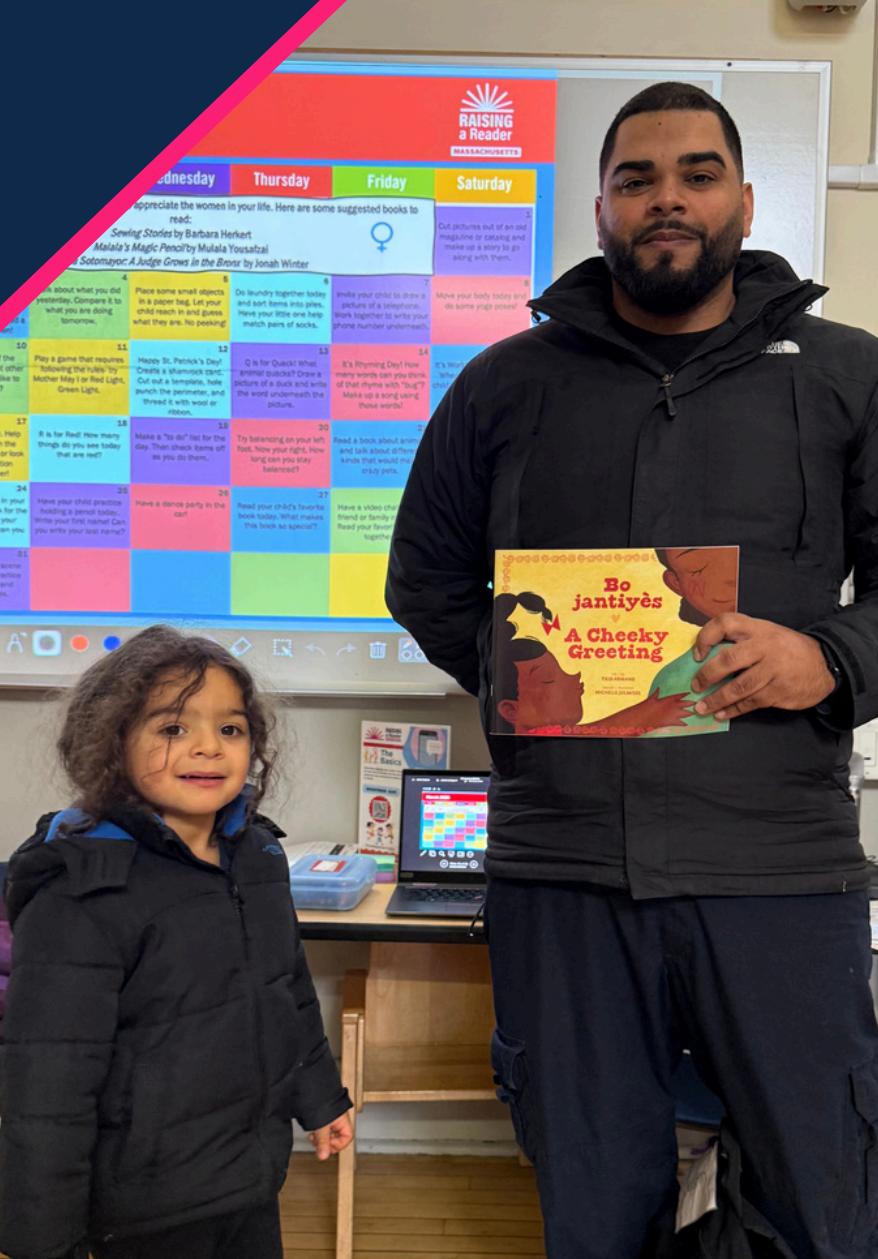
## **In-Kind Donors**

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Kristine Aristide  
Bain & Company  
Judy Blume  
Book Ends Winchester  
Boston Bruins  
Dan Camerota  
CCR Solutions, Inc.  
Charles Hotel  
City of Chelsea  
Columbus Hospitality Group  
Mercedes Dahar and Philip Dennehy  
Andre Dubus III  
Guaranty Fund Management Services, Inc. (GFMS)  
Harbor Sweets  
Nicole Parent Haughey and Philip Haughey  
Justin and Lydia Hayward  
Henrietta's Table  
Garth Hoffman and Remy Stressenger  
Holyoke Community College  
Jeff Kinney  
Kiss 108 Radio Station  
Jason and Heather Lang  
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Martignetti Companies  
MGM Springfield  
MiniLuxe  
Montage Resorts  
Praxis Precision Medicines, Inc.  
Revere Hotel  
Room to Read  
Sanofi  
Dan Shaughnessy  
Shreve, Crump & Low  
The Newbury Boston  
Julie Tremblay and Ryan Oldham  
Viga  
Wynn Resorts

*Includes funding pledged in FY 2025 and received in FY 2026.*

**"I always love supporting  
early literacy and seeing the  
excitement in students when  
they get to take new books  
home."  
- RAR-MA Partner**





## RAISING A READER MA TEAM

Christine Ward  
*Executive Director*

Katee Duffy  
*Director of Programs*

Angela Haynes  
*Director of Development*

Maria Mombieur  
*Associate Program Director*

Isaí Jiménez  
*Associate Program Director*

Guadalupe Panameño  
*Senior Program Manager*

Nina Norfleet  
*Development and Communications Manager*

Meg Schaubhut  
*Grant Specialist*

Lindsay Woods  
*Executive Administrator and Data Analytics Manager*

Claudia Chavarria  
*Program Manager*

Faten EL-Gamal  
*Program Manager*

Tatiana Keane Forero  
*Program Manager*

Qin Li  
*Program Manager*



**MASSACHUSETTS**

**Raising a Reader Massachusetts**

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**Boston, MA 02109**

**617-292-2665**

**info@raisingareaderma.org**

**Visit our website to learn more!**



**www.raisingareaderma.org**

Raising a Reader Massachusetts is a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN #80-0297898.



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