

About Us

The Heart of America Foundation®, a national nonprofit headquartered in Washington, D.C., uniquely promotes volunteer service and literacy. The organization inspires acts of service and a love of reading by building community and providing children in need with the tools to read, succeed and make a difference.

Committed to education and volunteerism, The Heart of America Foundation® engages volunteers by putting books into the hands of children who need them the most. Through the Books From The Heart® and READesign® programs, The Heart of America Foundation® transforms school libraries and education spaces in under-resourced communities into vital and vibrant centers of learning that become the heart of a school.

Since 1997, The Heart of America Foundation® has provided over one million children living in poverty with over 3.4 million library and take-home books. And, the organization has engaged volunteers in more than 1,075,000 hours of service to communities nationwide.

Books From The Heart®

Books From The Heart® puts books into the hands of children who need them the most.

- ♥ Elementary schools and students receive new, age-appropriate books to replenish school, classroom and home libraries. At book giveaway events, staff and volunteers read to children and introduce them to the topic of volunteerism.
- ♥ Books From The Heart® provides new books for newly renovated READesign® libraries and books for students to take home after library unveilings.
- ♥ Children participate in volunteer-led Books From The Heart® book drives by collecting new and like-new books to share with under-resourced elementary schools. This project introduces young people to community service and provides meaningful hands-on experiences.

READesign® Library Makeover

The READesign® Library Makeover transforms school libraries, in addition to children's dreams and futures.

- ♥ The READesign® program saturates school environments with new books. Remodeled library spaces are revitalized with improved technology, empty bookshelves are replenished with high quality books and the old library becomes a vibrant learning center—the new heart of a school.
- ♥ Each READesign® Library Makeover includes vibrant colors, specialized artwork, up to 2,000 new library books, improved technology, kid-friendly furniture and up to seven books per child to create their personal home libraries.
- ♥ The READesign® experience connects people to caring, compassionate community service for children in need. Community members, local youth and corporate sponsors volunteer in library beautification activities, book distributions, reading circles and other customized projects.
- ♥ The READesign® program renews community support in enriching student lives and helping them regain lost opportunities for learning.

Heroes of the Heart®

The Heroes of the Heart® Awards Program is a national recognition program that identifies inspirational individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to enrich the lives of others.

- ♥ The National Hero of the Heart® Award honors adults who embody the values at the heart of America. These remarkable people elevate the standard of social responsibility, ennoble the human race with the quality of their lives and provide hope and inspiration.
- ♥ The Christopher Reeve Award and scholarship is presented each year to an outstanding youth who has demonstrated tremendous courage and compassion in serving his or her community.
- ♥ The Gee Whiz Kids® Award and scholarship honors exemplary children, age 12 and under, who represent the best of their schools and communities.
- ♥ Heroes of the Heart awards honor youth in our partner schools and community-based organizations who have made meaningful contributions in their school and/or community.

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Our Impact

The Heart of America Foundation® has...

- ★ Impacted the lives of over **1 million children** since 1997.
- ★ Replenished, redecorated and revitalized **more than 215 school libraries and education spaces** in high need areas across the U.S. through its READesign® Library Makeover program.
- ★ Provided children living in poverty with **over 3.4 million books**—a value of **over \$21.7 million**.
- ★ Reached more than **300,000 children in Washington, D.C.** by distributing **880,000 books valued at \$6.25 million**
- ★ Helped volunteers serve **more than 1,075,000 hours** in the community.
- ★ Engaged **more than 500,000 youth and adult volunteers** in community service.

At a Glance

The Heart of America Foundation®...

- ♥ Was founded in 1997 by husband-and-wife team Bill and Angie Halamandaris, who have dedicated their lives to help improve the lives of children living in poverty.
- ♥ Is a national nonprofit headquartered in Washington, D.C.
- ♥ Uniquely combines volunteerism and literacy through its programs inspiring service and a love of reading.
- ♥ Engages sponsors and community volunteers to model how communities can work together to make a difference in schools.
- ♥ Helps schools and communities to teach children the importance of literacy and education.
- ♥ Puts books into the hands of children in need to provide them with the tools to read, succeed and make a difference.
- ♥ Distributes new books for school, classroom and home libraries to help students gain resources needed to succeed in school.
- ♥ Transforms school libraries in underserved communities across the U.S. into vital and vibrant centers of learning that become a safe haven and the heart of a school.

Why We Promote Literacy and Encourage a Love for Reading

- ★ 61% of low-income families have no books in their homes.
- ★ Children who have not developed basic literacy skills by the time they enter school are 3 to 4 times more likely to drop out.
- ★ Seven out of ten fourth graders cannot read at grade level.
- ★ Low literacy can lead to crime, unemployment and poverty.
- ★ Recent studies confirm that the availability of reading material is the strongest predictor of a child's ability to read and succeed academically.

What People Are Saying

- ★ "I consider the work of the Heart of America Foundation to be very important. I send you my prayers and best wishes for the success of your humanitarian endeavor." (*The Dalai Lama*)
- ★ "The Heart of America Foundation is making a wonderful difference!...A special thanks...for seeing critical needs and finding innovative ways to fill them...These acts and the many others you perform are restoring hope in the lives of children throughout the country. By giving children an opportunity to be leaders and givers, you reveal the compassion and community spirit that truly is the heart of America." (*Laura Bush, Former First Lady of the United States*)
- ★ "The READesign of the library has been an upgrade for our school in many ways. It has had a positive impact on everyone's attitude. It has provided a homey, cheerful area for reading and learning. The students love it. The physical space is now welcoming, and most importantly, kid-friendly. One child commented, 'Can I live here...all day?' Another said, 'I want this to be my library FOREVER!'" (*Valerie Perez, Assistant Principal, Gentilly Terrace Elementary School*)
- ★ "I had so much fun participating in this event, and am so proud that [my company] is involved in a project such as this one. I'm so glad that we were able to make such a positive influence in this area." (*Janay, Volunteer*)