

**Read to Me!  
Quarterly  
Spring 2007**

# CONNECT



## **VOLUNTEERS** **THE HEART AND SOUL OF READ TO ME!**

### **Did you know?**

**Read to Me!  
gives a bright  
yellow bag of  
baby books  
and literacy  
resources to  
every baby  
born in Nova  
Scotia!**

**To date,  
Read to Me!  
has given out**

**36,230  
bags  
containing**

**72,460  
high quality  
baby books!**

April 15th to 21st is Volunteer Appreciation Week. Read to Me! would like to take this opportunity to thank the over 130 dedicated volunteers who are the heart and soul of Read to Me!

Read to Me! volunteers wear many hats, including:

- volunteers who deliver the bag to new parents at the hospital bedside in 11 health care centres in Nova Scotia

- bag packers who pack the books and literacy materials in the bags

- the librarians who deliver the kits to each of the hospitals

- volunteer readers who read to children awaiting treatment at the IWK in the Emergency, Out-patient clinics, Same Day Surgery and Perinatal Follow Up.

Read to Me! volunteers are a very diverse group with one common thread - a passion for literacy and children. They also bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the program. Our volunteers include teachers, librarians, university students, medical students, grandparents and parents.

Our Spokesperson, Sheree Fitch says, "Every time we put a book into the hands of a child we are putting a light in their lives." The staff of Read to Me! want to thank all of our many dedicated volunteers for bringing light into the lives of so many Nova Scotian children.

Thank you!



Volunteers at  
Valley Regional Health  
Care Centre



Bag packers  
Bryce and Hazel Gibson



Volunteer Reader  
Katie Gillivan reads  
at the IWK

# THE STORY BEHIND THE READ TO ME! BAG

**E**ven though it is a cloudy day outside, Sandy Smyth's workshop is a sea of sunny yellow. That is because meters of the yellow fabric that eventually become the Read to Me! bag cover every surface in the room.



Sandy and her husband, Dave Smyth own Admiralty Canvas & Craft Company, a Dartmouth company that creates quality custom canvas products. In business since 1990, Sandy and Dave can often be seen at the Farmers' Market or regional craft fairs selling their own custom designs and creations which include colourful aprons, tote bags, children's art smocks and toys. They are also the creators of the bright yellow Read to Me! bags. The bags are made by just two people – Sandy and employee Andrya McDonald. This is an amazing fact when you consider that over 36,000 bags have been made by these two industrious women. But the story of the Read to Me! bag doesn't end here.

## MANY HANDS CREATE EACH READ TO ME! BAG

Few people know what an intensive process each bag goes through before it reaches a new baby. It starts when Sandy and Andrya unroll and cut 50 2x2 meter sheets off of a huge roll of yellow canvas. These sheets are stacked on top of one another on a large table. Sandy then uses a heavy duty industrial straight knife to cut the stack into 750 rectangular pieces.



Sandy Smyth cuts layers of canvas with an industrial straight knife

Each one will eventually become a Read to Me! bag, but first they need to be screen-printed with the Read to Me! bear logo.

The screen printing takes place at Halifax's Maritime Campus Store. In addition to offering one of the largest selections of swimwear in Atlantic Canada, Maritime Campus also does in-house custom screen-printing and embroidery. Here, each piece

of yellow canvas is placed on a textile printing press.



At Maritime Campus, the canvas is placed on the textile printing press

A blocked printing screen with the Read to Me! logo is then placed on top of the canvas. The screen is covered with royal blue ink (for an English bag) or bright red ink (for the French bag) which is then squeezed through the screen. The canvas is left with a perfect imprint of the bear logo. Each



Ink is squeezed through the blocked screen onto the canvas

screened piece is then run through a conveyor dryer to

# THE STORY BEHIND THE READ TO ME! BAG

get flash dried. Flash drying dries and cures the ink so it won't wash or rub off.



The printed canvas is run through a conveyor dryer to get flash dried

The staff at Maritime Campus then restack the printed canvas into Admiralty's tubs which Sandy takes back to her workshop in Dartmouth.

## READY, SET, SEW!

The canvas is now ready to become a bag. Andrya runs



At Admiralty Canvas, Andrya sews the sides of each bag together

the ends of each piece of canvas through a serger which creates a finished seam at the top of the bag. She then sews the sides of the bag together and tacks on

the handle. One final zip through the sewing machine and voila – one Read to Me! book bag!

## MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER JOB

"This exciting and vibrant program is more than just another job to Admiralty," says Sandy, "We are honoured to be part of a team



Andrya then sews on the bag's handle

that connects the family of each newborn baby in Nova Scotia with such important information."

Once a little girl came to see Sandy carrying a well loved and well used Read to Me! bag with a handle that was just about to come off. Sandy offered her a brand new bag but the little girl so loved her very own original Read to Me! bag that she couldn't imagine exchanging it for a new one. Sandy gladly replaced the handle on the bag for the little girl, who expressed her appreciation to Sandy with a thank you card which is posted on Admiralty's notice board.

Once it is sewn, the journey of the Read to Me! bag has only just begun - it still must be filled with books and resources and then travel to its final destination - into the



Molly MacKinnon proudly displays her Read to Me! bag

hands families across Nova Scotia. We'll follow the continuing journey of the Read to Me! bag in the next issue of Connect.

## TELL US ABOUT YOUR READ TO ME! BAG

We've seen Read to Me! bags at doctor's offices, libraries, the grocery store and tucked into strollers. We'd love to know how your family uses the Read to Me! bag. Send or email your pictures and stories to: [readtome@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:readtome@iwk.nshealth.ca)

Many thanks to the hardworking people at Admiralty Canvas and Maritime Campus Store who have helped to create over 36,000 Read to Me! bags since 2002.

## THANKS TO ....

CanWest Raise-a-Reader Campaign is a national literacy initiative which raised \$2.24 million dollars this year. Thousands of volunteers across the country took to the streets to solicit donations for a special literacy edition of the local daily newspaper.

In Halifax, Read to Me! volunteers hit the streets, selling editions of the Chronicle Herald. Money raised in each community stays in that community to support family literacy programs.

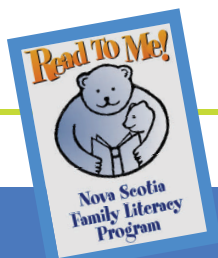
Read to Me! was delighted to receive a grant of \$3,081 from this year's Raise-a-Reader campaign.



In addition, Read to Me! also received a donation of 250 award-winning titles from CanWest Raise-a-Reader and General Mills Canada's 'Bite into Books' program. The books were included in boxes of General Mills cereals and snacks, and were also distributed to literacy groups across Canada like Read to Me! The books have been distributed to regional Read to Me! programs throughout the province.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO...

Banco del Libro, a reading promotion program in Venezuela, has won the 2007 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. The program, launched in 1958, works to distribute books and promote reading to children in Venezuela. They have accomplished this with a true pioneering spirit, blending new technology with creative innovations such as the 'Bibliomulas', mules which carry books and computers to isolated villages in the Andes. By awarding the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award to Banco del Libro, the jury have celebrated the importance of reading promotion programs and the right of every child to literacy.



### Read to Me!

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We're on the web!  
[readtome.ca](http://readtome.ca)

### Each Read to Me! Bag contains:

- An award winning DVD with tips for reading with baby
- Two high-quality baby books
- An invitation to join the library
- A resource booklet
- A CD of lullabies and nursery rhymes
- Coupons from local booksellers



Read to Me! is a provincial, hospital-based 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 in the province.

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