

# A Letter From the Project's Founder, Pam Leo

*To everyone who cares about everyone learning to read:*

On Sunday, April 24, 2016, I wrote the poem "Please Read To Me - a child's plea for love and literacy." That poem was a gift. I don't normally even write poetry. So I began to Google family literacy programs to see who was supposed to receive this gift. On every family literacy website I found, I read the same startling statistics:

- ☆ One in four children in the U.S. does not learn to read.
- ☆ 2/3 of the 15.5 million impoverished children in the U.S. do not have a single book to call their own.
- ☆ There is one children's book for every three hundred children in low income neighborhoods.
- ☆ 2/3 of the children who are not reading on grade level by grade four will end up in prison or on welfare.
- ☆ The number one indicator that children will arrive at kindergarten ready to learn to read is growing up in a home with lots of books and being read to daily from birth.

A few days later I heard on the news that they were gearing up for a food drive for the food pantries and suddenly it came to me: Collect donated books as well as donated food and give those books out at the food pantries so ALL parents can have books to read to their young children, so ALL children will be ready to learn to read. I decided to initiate a grassroots family literacy movement that would be implemented by the people, for the people. Unlike so many family literacy programs, that I could no longer contact because they had lost their funding, this project won't require funding.

Each participating food pantry or WIC office will receive donated new and gently used, quality children's books from their local community via book donation boxes placed in the local schools, day cares, churches, and libraries. Book Fairy helper volunteers will collect those books and deliver them to their food pantry where more youth and/or elder volunteers will sort, clean, and shelve the books for parents to pick out for their children when they come to get food.

The other way to get donated books will be book drives. We can partner with food drives and get double benefit for everyone's efforts. There is no shortage of gently used children's books, only a lack of the redistribution of them. This project provides many opportunities for volunteers of all ages and gives children a chance to help other children by donating their outgrown or already read books.

My goal for this project is that it will go statewide to every food pantry here in Maine, and then, "as Maine goes" so goes the project, nationwide, then worldwide. "Books change children's lives...for good." Our mission is: *No Child With No Books.*

My hope for this project is that the "right" people—those who feel as passionately as I do that learning to read is a human right—will hear of the project and use whatever influence they have in the world to help the book fairy and me to "make it so."

If you are one of those people, or you know of one of those people, who would want to support this project, I invite you to help make this happen for all the parents, and all the children who need what we can so easily provide, with a little love, a little work, and a lot of grace.

I have been saying, since I began working on this project, that it came to me with 1,000 angels attached. People have been helping at every turn. I hope you will be one of them. We can do this.

As the fairies say:

Fly with you,



book fairy  
pantry project

Pam Leo, founder  
"No Child With No Books."  
"Books change children's lives...for good."  
BookFairyPantryProject.com