



# SPRINGFIELD REAL MEN READ

*"The things I want to know are in books."*  
-C. S. Lewis

READING. INSPIRING. LEADING.

## Fact Sheet

Springfield Real Men Read is a literacy and mentoring initiative of Springfield Public Schools. The program started with a four-month pilot in January 2010 and completed its first full year in May 2011.

### Program Goals

- To give students a positive experience with adult males
- To increase student interest in reading and improve reading ability
- To introduce students to men who model positive behavior, including: self-discipline, positive attitude, good work ethic, altruism, and self respect
- To convey that reading and critical thinking are essential to success
- To expose students to various professions through interaction with their mentors
- To impress upon men the value of their presence in the classroom
- To create a connection with students and their mentors that extends beyond the classroom and into the community

### Why Men

Fifty percent of marriages in the U.S. end in divorce. At some time during childhood, children of divorce will live with one parent, most often their mother. Today a greater number of children are also born to unmarried parents. At the same time, 10 percent of students in our District (1,500) have one or both parents who are incarcerated. All these factors contribute to a need for positive role models in our children's lives. The men in Real Men Read are fathers and grandfathers who inspire our children to pursue academic excellence despite their circumstances. These men relate well to the students, often sharing their personal histories and strategies for overcoming life's obstacles.

### Who are Our Mentors

Our mentors represent a cross-section of our community. They work in the public and private sector, government, media, and the faith community. A mentor must: 1) Care deeply about our youth; and 2) Be passionate about literacy. A complete list of participants is available upon request.

### Schedule of Readings

Readings take place on the first or second Tuesday of each month beginning in October. Readings continue through May. No readings are scheduled in March.

### **Cost of the Program**

All readers are volunteers. The cost associated with the program is for the books the students receive. Each student in a participating class receives a book each month for his/home home library. The cost is \$35 for kindergarten through fourth-grade students and \$42 for fifth through seventh grade students.

### **Impact on Students**

Student interest in reading has increased dramatically as a result of this program. Of sixth grade students responding to an online survey last spring, 66 percent said they were inspired to read as a result of the program, and 72 percent stated they want to be a part of the program again next year. Seventy two percent of **fifth-grade** students responding to the same survey reported an increased interest in reading. And, 76 percent said they want to participate next year.

### **The Books for the Program**

The books used for the program are from Scholastic's REAL Program. The titles include many award winners, including Bud, Not Buddy, a Newbery Winner and A Chair for my Mother, a Caldecott Winner. The books are excellent and enjoyed by students and teachers alike.

### **Our Supporters**

Springfield Real Men Read is funded by the generosity of these community members: Gregg Argenta, David and Laurie Farrell, Bunn O Matic, O'Shea Builders and St. John's Hospital. Each donated \$1,000 or more to the program. Others have also supported the program with smaller contributions.

In July 2011, the program received a \$20,000 venture grant from the United Way of Central Illinois. The grant money was used to expand the program in our six middle schools.

### **Contact us**

For more information about Springfield Real Men Read, contact program coordinator Donna Treadwell at 217 525-3257 or e-mail [dtreadwell@sps186.org](mailto:dtreadwell@sps186.org).