



February 17, 2010


To Whom It May Concern:

The Garfield County Public Library District (GCPLD) is extremely fortunate to have developed a partnership over the past five years with the Roaring Fork Valley Early Learning Fund's program, *Raising A Reader*. The program has made a significant impact in bringing underserved children and their families into the public library and introducing them to books. The effect of this early literacy exposure is far-reaching, ensuring that these children will develop the necessary tools to excel at reading in the future as students and adults.

Raising A Reader is a program that not only encourages family involvement in reading starting at an early age, but also reinforces the act of using the library and enjoying a large variety of reading materials. Research shows that reading aloud with young children not only increases vocabulary but also develops a rich tapestry of stories in children's minds, which builds the imagination and the ability to empathize with the lives of others. GCPLD could not ask for a better partner than Early Learning Fund to support the necessary early literacy skills emphasized by this program, and help children develop a life-long love of reading and books.

GCPLD is firmly committed to continuing its relationship with Early Learning Fund. This past year, over 1,000 Garfield County preschoolers attended Blue Bag Library Celebrations with their parents and caregivers at our six branch library locations. Each child received a special "blue" library bag, a library card and enjoyed a story time put on by library staff. The excitement was palpable as we watched the children check out their first library books. We now see these same kids return to the library over and over with those blue bags throughout the year. Additionally, the staff at Early Learning Fund make the program simple to participate in for caregivers, families and library staff, and seek to continuously improve the process through frequent communication and support.

Programs as comprehensive and effective as *Raising A Reader* are few and far between in serving preschool children and their families. I believe we have an excellent opportunity to continue to make a significant difference in the lives of these young children and support the teachers and caregivers engaged in this challenging field. I encourage you to fully support this exemplary literacy program that is critical for the future of all our children.


Amelia Shelley (48)
Executive Director