

Rock For Reading 2010

Rock For Reading 2010 is a framework to prioritize decisions and forward movement toward improvement and growth of Rock For Reading. It will direct the work of Rock For Reading and the yearly goals of the board and staff for three years (2008-2010). A strategic planning committee of the board developed this blueprint and will be charged with regular monitoring and review to ensure that Rock For Reading meets the benchmarks set forth in Rock For Reading 2010.

Summary

Rock For Reading was founded in 2004 in response to the increasing rise in illiteracy in the City of Chicago. Illiteracy can cause an erosion of our society. It isolates children and adults alike, robbing them of the skills they need to function confidently in all walks of life. Although illiteracy does the most damage on an individual basis, collectively it undermines the long-term success of our society as a whole.

Rock For Reading leverages the power of music to raise awareness of the problems associated with illiteracy and rally our communities to gather and create the resources needed to address this critical issue. These resources – people, money and books – are used to support organizations championing the cause of literacy, including libraries, schools and community education/advocacy groups.

Rock For Reading 2010 is focused on elevating Rock For Reading to the next level by laying the foundation for success and continued, prioritized growth.

To accomplish this, Rock For Reading will:

- Deliver additional resources to community organizations, schools and libraries
- Expand and develop its boards
- Create and re-invigorate board committees to achieve plans for growth
- Focus on developing and growing individual giving with the addition of a major giving circle
- Secure title sponsors for Rock For Reading events
- Communicate success

Working with its grantees, partners and an engaged public, Rock For Reading will strengthen its reputation as a leading voice in raising awareness in support of increased literacy in Chicago.

Mission

Rock For Reading leverages the power of ROCK to inspire literacy – motivating and empowering people to enrich their lives through reading.

Vision

Reading is an essential foundation for success in school, competing successfully in the workplace and for dreaming. Lifelong education empowers people to ultimately improve socioeconomic conditions for their families, communities, countries and future generations. Literacy opens doors of opportunity and understanding that no other skill can provide. The ability to read, write and understand stimulates communications that impact every life.

Rock For Reading's vision is to inspire a community of readers and to create a community of dreamers.

History

Rock For Reading was founded in 2004 by singer-songwriter Alice Peacock, her husband Hugh Haller and friends. The organization, which began as an all-day music festival, has become a leading voice in creating literacy awareness in Chicago, having provided over a million dollars in resources to community organizations and schools throughout the greater Chicago area.

In 2003, the idea that became Rock For Reading began to germinate and eventually took shape. Alice was fortunate to participate in Farm Aid and was impressed with the passion and activism that the group brought to its cause. Farm Aid has been a viable source of support for our family farmers for over 20 years.

In the spirit of Farm Aid, Alice, Hugh and friends decided that an annual music concert would be the signature event of Rock For Reading. In 2004, Rock For Reading organized a one-day benefit concert that brought together Chicago recording artists to perform at a daylong outdoor music festival for adults and children. The day was shortened due to inclement weather, but the foundation was laid for future events.

In 2005, a Board of Directors was formed, comprised of leading Chicago professionals from many fields. Official 501(c)(3) non-profit tax status was granted and new corporate sponsors were secured. All were anxious to be part of something special.

Since 2005, Rock For Reading has held signature concerts featuring Lucinda Williams, Nickle Creek, Willy Porter and David Gray. Rock For Reading also co-hosted a WXRT/Potbelly Sandwich Works "Live" radio show with Alice Peacock, Steve Winwood and Lin Brehmer.

Rock For Reading's key partners include Chicago Public Library, Chicago Public Schools, The Chicago Community Trust, The Chicago Tribune Company/RedEye, Encyclopedia Britannica, Goose Island, WXRT 93.1FM, Jam Productions, LaSalle Bank, Quaker Oats/Gatorade, Trungale, Egan and Associates, and Weigl Publishing.

Previous grantees include BEST Adult Literacy Program, Big Shoulders, Book Worm Angels, BREAD for the Head, Cabrini Green Tutoring, Casa Juan Diego, Good News Partners, Literacy Works, Literature for All of Us, Lutheran Day Care, One to One Learning Center, Sit, Stay, Read, StoryBus, and Sue Duncan Child Center.

The direction and goals included in this plan reflect Rock For Reading's understanding of what its constituencies value most about the organization, as well as challenges and opportunities for offering a unique, high-profile voice to increase literacy and reading in Chicago.

Challenges and Strategic Objectives

Rock For Reading board and staff members will consider the following challenges and strategies when making decisions about Rock For Reading partnerships and activities:

- Raise public awareness of the growing problems of illiteracy
- Increase resources for community organizations, schools and libraries
- Forge and strengthen partnerships and strategic alliances to raise funds and books
- Expand outreach to additional grass-root community organizations that support literacy and reading programs
- Develop organizational structure to ensure success and endurance, including growing and developing Rock For Reading boards.

Goals and Objectives

In order to pursue the strategic direction and achieve the goals described above, Rock For Reading 2010 provides the following approach:

Board Development

Increase membership and activity on Rock For Reading's boards and create additional boards as needed to support the organization's mission and work.

- Review current board evaluation tools
- Evaluate and engage current board members
- Grow existing boards
- Create an Artist Board
- Develop board nomination process and create pool of candidates.

Finance and Operations

Provide financial and operational oversight for Rock For Reading and the Board

- Review current financial policies and recommend new policies
- Create operations handbook

Individual Giving

Develop and steward Rock For Reading's individual and foundation donors

- Increase revenue from individuals and foundations
- Develop and implement a major gifts circle

Strategic Partnerships

Develop and steward Rock For Reading's strategic partners

- Develop sponsorship opportunities and packages
- Increase corporate sponsorship
- Increase strategic alliances

Events

Develop Rock For Reading events and engage in partner events to maximize impact and raise awareness

- Secure Millennium Park for Rock For Reading Signature Concert
- Review current events to confirm alignment to mission and strategic plan
- Develop matrix for Rock For Reading's participation in an event

Grants

Award resources to community organizations, schools and libraries throughout Chicagoland

- Review and develop grant cycle, including grantee reporting
- Develop book grant process
- Increase pool of potential grantees
- Review role with grantee partners and create grant community/institutionalizing auxiliary support

Communications

Communicate Rock For Reading's mission, vision and impact

- Update the communications plan to align with the strategic plan
- Develop key messages and proof points
- Train boards on messaging
- Secure earned media placements and measure quantity and quality of message pull-through
- Partner on the development of newsworthy, Chicago-based literacy survey
- Create annual report
- Generate regular column in media

Available Resources

1. Action Plan (2008-2010)
2. Budget (2008)
3. Board Lists
4. Board Committee Descriptions