

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THE TEAM!

The Reading Team helps young children become strong readers, writers, listeners, and speakers. We do this by engaging them in a wide range of literacy-nurturing lessons and activities so they can succeed in school and in life. All of our programs are made possible by the generosity of supporters like you.

Handing Over the Leadership

Dear Friends,

I hope you are staying safe and healthy during the COVID-19 crisis. We are all fine here and doing our best to support our children's literacy education during this difficult time. We are in regular contact with the parents of our students and have referred them to a wealth of free online resources their children can use to continue their academic growth. When our programs reopen our Literacy Mentors and staff will be ready to help children recoup any lost ground on their way to being strong readers and writers.

Our new executive director, Dana Points, is meeting the challenges of this new reality in ways that are positioning the Reading Team for a strong future. She is leading all aspects of the organization and providing the strategic vision and leadership that will allow us to help even more children and families with our proven programs.

This is a good time for me to hand over leadership of the Reading Team. Dana and our newly expanded board of directors are energized for our next chapter of growth, and I look forward to continuing to play an active role as a member of the board.

Please join me in welcoming Dana. (You can learn more about her on page 3.) I look forward to your meeting Dana at our Harlem headquarters and seeing our programs when we are all back in action. Thank you for the commitment and support you have given me and the Reading Team over the years.

Warm regards,



Maureen Rover

Founder

Member, Board of Directors



Maureen and Dana visit our fifth graders.

Spotlight on Lam Hui, Ph.D.

Benefactor and Advocate for the Reading Team

Lam Hui, Ph.D., spends his days teaching at Columbia University and pondering the mysteries of the universe. Twice a week, however, he heads off campus, leading a group of volunteer math tutors into Harlem to visit a much younger group of students: the kindergarten through third graders at the Reading Team's flagship After-School Program.

Born in Hong Kong, Lam came to the United States for college, earning a B.A. in physics at the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in physics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As busy as he is as a Professor of Physics at Columbia, where his research specialty is theoretical cosmology, Lam makes time for interests beyond his academic role. He believes in learning throughout life and so is a great role model for the Reading Team's students. Lam plays the guitar and is learning to play the cello. He is also a fervent reader. One of his favorite books is Anthony Doerr's *All the Light We Cannot See*, a story about connection and how little gestures of kindness can make a huge impact.

Lam learned of the importance of giving at an early age. His parents were supportive of him academically, insisting that he do well in school, and they taught him to be kind and generous to people. He travels each summer to Hong Kong with his wife and daughter to visit his parents and siblings and to maintain his strong cultural ties. The importance of giving and education that

he absorbed from his parents led to Lam's generous philanthropy in support of the Reading Team. He also actively promotes the Reading Team to others, increasing the visibility of the program's impact. Firmly believing that, as he says, "Each child at the beginning is capable of doing anything," he epitomizes this core value of the Reading Team.

Lam's involvement with the Reading Team began in 2016 when he met founder Maureen Rover at an education panel, and she left a deep impression. Soon after, Lam approached Maureen with the idea to introduce a math program at the Reading Team. "It is a blessing to have the opportunity to work with the Reading Team," he says. Lam and his colleagues, postdocs, and students at Columbia University visit the Reading Team to reinforce math skills using games and to help hone the children's listening ability by reading stories about numbers. Math and reading both involve abstract thinking and analytical skills, and Reading Team students enjoy stories about successful scientists and mathematicians.

The Reading Team is fortunate to have Lam as both a volunteer leader and a loyal donor. The Columbia University volunteers are fully engaged, and their own excitement about math and spirit of giving has made a significant impression on the young children of the Harlem community. Lam's love of reading and commitment to lifelong learning make him a compelling role model for children and a cherished supporter.

"Each child at the beginning is capable of doing anything."



Volunteers from Columbia University work with children at the Reading Team.

My Reading Team Story

A Note from Our New Executive Director, Dana Points



My journey to the Reading Team began about six years ago, or possibly when I was six years old. As a child, I was a passionate, flashlight-under-the-covers reader (probably no surprise that I was nearsighted by third grade). You can imagine what happened next. I worshiped Harriet the Spy, was the editor of my high-school newspaper, majored

in English at Barnard, and went on to a 25-year career as a writer and editor, focusing first on women's health and then on the well-being of children and families as editor in chief of the *Parents* magazine brand.

About six years ago, I began to think more intently about my life's purpose. Informing and entertaining parents was helpful, but I yearned to do more for children, especially the kids I saw every day in Harlem where I have lived for 20 years. I had served on nonprofit boards and began to study inspiring nonprofit leaders carefully to understand how they maximized the impact of their organization. I soon knew those lessons and the skills I had honed in the corporate world would serve me well. I found my first job in the nonprofit sector and I haven't looked back.

The Reading Team was the ideal next step on my path. I want every child to have the opportunities that reading unlocked for me—to escape into another world, to learn new things, to succeed in school, and to lead a rewarding and productive life. Children who enter kindergarten with inadequate reading skills are likely to remain behind their peers forever, and those who start fourth grade on shaky ground as readers are four times more likely to drop out of school. The Reading Team's focus on early literacy, from preschool through fifth grade, is exactly what children need.

I knew the facts. But then I met the children. *Wow!* I was enthralled by their enthusiasm for the program and by the connection they clearly felt with our Literacy Mentors and with "Ms. Margaret" (Margaret Banier, our longtime program director). They come every afternoon, after a full day of school, eager to get to work, even though the work can be difficult. And those who have graduated keep coming back, years later, to sit in Margaret's visitor's chair and report in on their successes and challenges and—perhaps most important—their college search process.

The Reading Team has never struggled to find children and families who want to commit to our program. More children need our help, and the number of families we can partner with is only limited by our financial resources. I come to work every day focused on connecting with other people like me—and like you—who understand the immense power of reading in a child's life, who want to support the right to literacy for all children, and who believe that every child's future can be bright.

What Makes the Reading Team So Relevant

- **Our program is unique.** Our trained Literacy Mentors are the secret behind the Reading Team's success. Graduate students of education and professional educators, they carefully plan an engaging curriculum that helps children focus on learning in a safe and nurturing environment. They also teach children valuable life skills, such as self-mastery, cooperation, perseverance, and more.

- **The need is great.** Maureen Rover founded the Reading Team in response to extraordinarily high rates of reading failure. Today, almost 20 years later, more than half of New York City children are still failing the New York State English Language Arts Exam (NYS ELA), which is administered annually to third through fifth graders. In Harlem, where our work is focused, the failure rate is 70 percent.

- **Our results are unrivaled.** In 2019, 84 percent of Reading Team students passed the NYS ELA, a record high. It's a testament to the effectiveness of our program, which devotes up to 540 hours per child per year to instruction in reading, writing, speaking and listening. With your support, we will help children recover from academic setbacks they face due to pandemic-related school closures.

"I knew the facts about childhood literacy. But then I met the Reading Team children. *Wow!* I was enthralled by their enthusiasm for the program."

Why I Give Monthly to the Reading Team

Finding a good charity with which you have a strong personal connection is rare. Yet, we can all name notable charities that we support in one way or another. I am enamored of the Reading Team because of its founder, Maureen Rover. She is the single motivating factor for my long term and continued giving.

When I met Maureen many years ago, I knew instantly that the important work she was doing, with genuine goodness and passion, deserved my support. Any time I have asked her a question or for her views on the subject of early childhood education, I have been impressed with her thorough and

thoughtful responses. You need only to listen to Maureen's ideas about early literacy education, and you will understand why I support the Reading Team.

I encourage all those close to me, including my daughters who know Maureen, to find a way to introduce the Reading Team to their own friends and associates and to support the young children of the Harlem community through its remarkable programs.

Joe Kartiganer
New York City, NY

What You Can Do for the Reading Team

1. MAKE IT MONTHLY

Visit readingteam.org and click on "Donate" on the upper right-hand corner of the page to give a gift via PayPal. On the donation form, you will have an opportunity to choose to make your gift monthly. Monthly gifts help us plan for the future!

2. MAKE A MATCHING GIFT

The impact of your gift may be doubled or even tripled by your employer's matching gift program. Visit your company web site to find out if your employer matches charitable gifts and to download or request a matching gift form. Then fill it out and forward it by mail to: The Reading Team, 2090 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd., Suite 100, New York, NY 10027. Or email your form to margot@readingteam.org. We will do the rest. Some companies match gifts made by retirees and/or spouses.

3. MAKE A BEQUEST

Including the Reading Team in your estate plans is a wonderful way to safeguard the organization's future, and it is easy to do. A bequest to the Reading Team may be included in a will when it is written or revised, or added through a codicil, a separate amendment to an existing will. All charitable bequests are fully deductible from the gross estate. The following is an example of suggested language to include in a will/trust:



Preschoolers enjoy customized lessons with the Waterford Early Reading Program.

"I give and bequeath to the Reading Team, a not-for-profit organization, presently located at 2090 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd, Suite 100, New York, NY, 10027, the sum of _____ [or _____% of my estate], to be used for the accomplishment of its general purpose [or for a specific purpose as indicated]."

Please consult with your attorney to adapt this language to your individual circumstances as part of an overall estate plan. If you have already designated the Reading Team in your will or are planning to do this, please let us know by contacting margot@readingteam.org.

WE NEED YOU MORE THAN EVER

It is easy to make a difference today. We hope you will partner with us at this time as we continue to improve the lives of our community's most important asset, its children.

Please go to readingteam.org and give today!