

JOHN CORCORAN
FOUNDATION

Sharing the Victory

Teaching children and adults to read, write, and comprehend is not only our essential duty and investment in America's future; it is also an act of love.

—John Corcoran



Sharing the Victory

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Dear Friends,

This year has been another successful journey for the John Corcoran Foundation and for literacy around the nation. People are the most important aspect of a non-profit organization; they give life, passion, and strength to our work and mission.

The employees, tutors, teachers, principals, students, board members and partners of the Foundation are not only talented and diligent, but have the genuine desire to see every American child and adult learn to read and write. I am beyond grateful for the dedication of these individuals and their support.

In June 2009, we celebrated the 12-year anniversary of the John Corcoran Foundation. We have tutored over 1,000 students and trained more than 300 tutors while creating awareness around the world for literacy.

We are proud of many 2008 highlights, including these achievements:



- Awarded Supplemental Educational Service status in the state of California
- Tutored 350 students in Title One schools as Supplemental Education Service providers in Colorado and a pilot program in California
- Trained 70 new tutors
- Sponsored a successful book drive for Heartland Girls Ranch in Benson, Minnesota
- Developed a new partnership with Ounce of Prevention Reading Center in Flushing, Michigan
- Published *The Bridge to Literacy* and a new edition of *The Teacher Who Couldn't Read* (Kaplan Publishing, 2008)
- Participated on Congressional Black Caucus panel "Read, Lead, Succeed," hosted by Congressman Chaka Fattah
- Revitalized the JCF Web site
- Enhanced marketing strategies
- Presented 24 keynote and conference addresses
- Featured in Rotary International's *Rotarian* magazine (March, 2008)
- Cultivated research partnership opportunities with Wake Forest University, North Carolina

The JCF continues with its commitment to literacy! Our *Annual Report* shows the Foundation's growth in service and its solid financial position. It also provides insights into our future direction, which is to develop the noble cause of teaching all children, youth, and adults like me to read and write.

Sincerely,

John Corcoran

John Corcoran
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
John Corcoran Foundation

HISTORY AND MISSION

The John Corcoran Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit corporation, founded in 1997, for the express purpose of facilitating the prevention and eradication of illiteracy in adults and children across America through public awareness, creation and dissemination of resources, and training and mentoring existing literacy organizations and education programs.

We are pleased to present this annual report featuring our progress on delivering our mission to a growing audience during the past year.

Where it all started. . . .

With speaking engagements and appearances related to the publication of his first book, *The Teacher Who Couldn't Read*, Mr. Corcoran welcomed many opportunities through the years to articulate the problem of illiteracy.

Early on, it seemed logical to leave the solutions to others, those who had experience in imparting literacy skills.

In time, however, Mr. Corcoran recognized that addressing an audience and explaining what had to be done was simply not enough. Despite many laudable efforts and achievements within the literacy field, millions of students, parents, employees, athletes, and artists across America continued to elude numerous organizations seeking to help them.

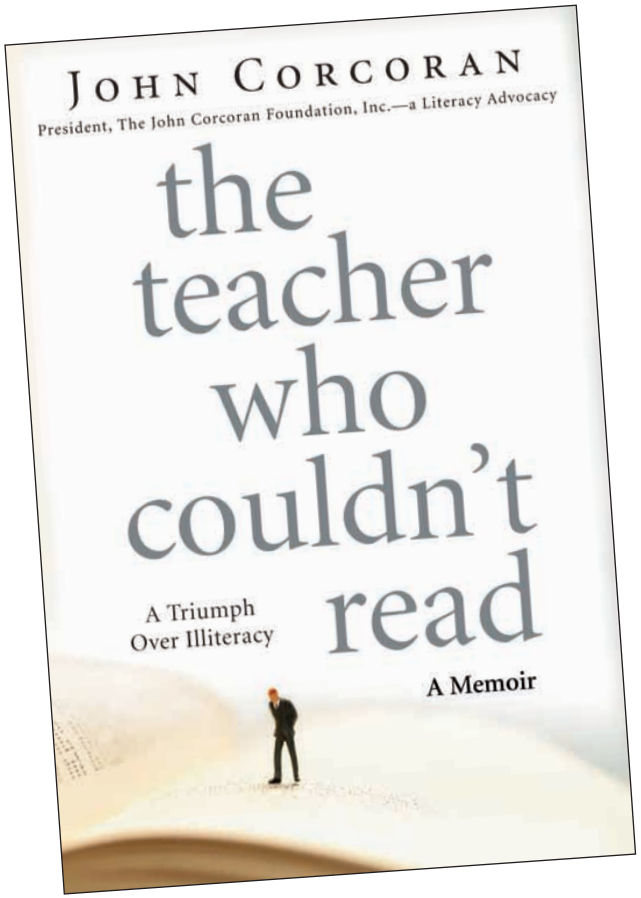
A new direct and personal voice was needed to fill the gap on unreached people. Through the years, many celebrity spokespeople affiliated with the cause of literacy have been in the spotlight, but none seems to have maintained the staying power that comes with lifelong dedication to the work.

Mr. Corcoran discovered that his distinct voice as a non-literate teacher who learned to read at the age of 48 made him a lightning rod for the unreached. Those who related to his experience came to associate his name with credibility. In turn, he sought ways to channel this positive association into service.

The need for a two-pronged approach of awareness of the problem and providing resources under Mr. Corcoran's name was increasingly apparent every time he spoke. Through his mass media interviews and public speaking, he was approached time and time again by people wanting to help and also needing help.

The Foundation was created as Mr. Corcoran's way to respond and to model what others can do.

> Once you learn to read, you will forever be free.
>
> Frederick Douglass



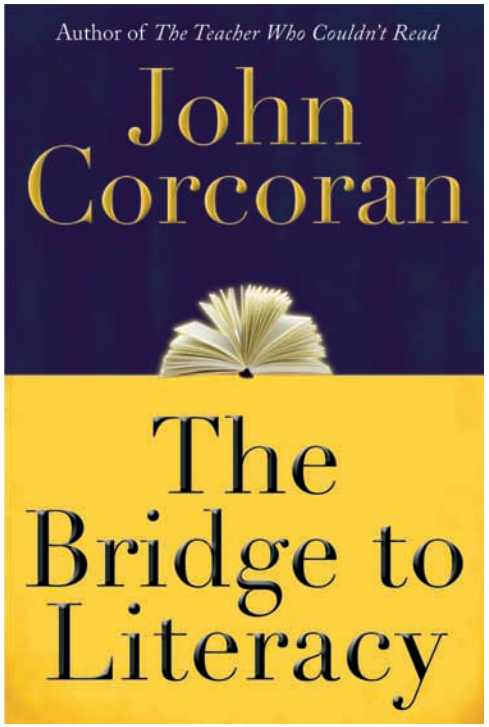
PROGRAMS

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Publications

With Kaplan Publishing releasing *The Bridge to Literacy* and re-releasing *The Teacher Who Couldn't Read*, John Corcoran has had numerous opportunities throughout 2008 to share his story and offer insight and solutions to the illiteracy crisis. The books have been shipped internationally to Eastern Africa, South Africa, Mexico, Poland, England, Wales, and Canada.

Whereas *The Teacher Who Couldn't Read* pertained to Mr. Corcoran's past, *The Bridge to Literacy* was written to turn the limelight from his individual history toward shaping the future of literacy in America.



Speeches and Appearances

Mr. Corcoran spoke in 10 states this year to thousands of literacy providers, teachers, tutors, educators, policymakers, parents, and students.

> John tells a story full of hope and possibility that speaks to the core of our mission to end illiteracy in our region. Our audience was captivated while he spoke and left feeling empowered to make a change.
>
> Dan S. Petty
> President and CEO
> North Texas Future Fund

Keynote Addresses Included:

- Adult Learner Leadership Institute graduation, Georgina Cole Library, Carlsbad, California
- Arkansas Association of Community and Adult Education and Arkansas Literacy Councils Conference, North Little Rock, Arkansas
- Autoskill International Partners in Education Executive Briefing, Asheville, North Carolina
- Institute for Bibb County Schools Day, Bibb, Alabama
- Breakfast of Champions, Literacy B.C., British Columbia
- Champions of Literacy Luncheon, "Lift Your World with Books," Scottish Rite Library and Museum, Dallas, Texas
- College Planning Forum, Dana Hills High School, Dana Point, California
- Institute for Cullman County Schools, Tom Drake Coliseum, Wallace State Community College, Hanceville, Alabama
- Delta Kappa Gamma International Meeting, Carlsbad, California



In 2008, John Corcoran delivered a speech to benefit Reading Is Fundamental, an organization that supports literacy by gifting books to children. *Photos provided courtesy of Reading Is Fundamental.*

- Green Oak Ranch Ministries Chapel, Vista, California
- Literacy Day in Santa Fe, New Mexico Coalition for Literacy, Capital Building Rotunda
- 2008 North Texas Regional Literacy Summit, "Meeting the Challenge for Exponential Change," Dallas, Texas
- Reading is Fundamental Partner Summit, Washington, D.C.
- Institute for Tucumcari Public Schools, Tucumcari, New Mexico
- Rotary International District 5330 Conference, "Celebrate Team Rotary," Ontario, California
- Rotary District 6200 Conference, "Many Approaches, One Goal: Advancing the Cause of Literacy," Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- West Alabama Literacy Initiative, The Literacy Summit, Bryant Conference Center, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

John Corcoran was our featured speaker at New Mexico's celebration of International Literacy Day in 2008. We chose him because his life story and advocacy work speak volumes to the cause of adult literacy. He was so moving, genuine, and passionate. Our guests walked away with a powerful message that day very few others could replicate, especially those "on the outside."

Heather Heunermund
Executive Director
New Mexico Coalition for Literacy

Other Speeches Included:

- *Brains R Us: The Science of Educating*, Salk Institute, La Jolla, California
- Capistrano Adult and Community Education Meeting, San Juan Capistrano, California
- Congressional Black Caucus panel "Read, Lead, Succeed," Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C.
- Hemet Adult Literacy Advocates, Hemet Public Library, California
- Optimist Club of Carlsbad Meeting, Carlsbad, California
- San Diego Rotary Club Meeting, San Diego, California
- Shelton School, Dallas, Texas

Most notably, Mr. Corcoran spoke on the "Read, Lead, Succeed" panel at the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington, D.C. Copies of the two books were gifted to each member of the Caucus.



John Corcoran with Congressman Chaka Fattah.

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy conducted an exhaustive study of adult literacy levels in the United States. The results are alarming; some 93 million adults do not have the sufficient literacy skills to maneuver in today's multifaceted society. This forum will not only examine the root cause of the issue but will delineate the necessary steps to end the cycle of illiteracy.

Read, Lead, Succeed Panel

Web Initiatives

A large part of our strategic marketing and outreach plan is Internet-based, including the renovation of our Web site, a new logo, updated calendar of

events, blogs, book specials, clips on YouTube, and a strong Web presence in Google search engines and Web-networking tools, such as LinkedIn, GoodReads, and Facebook. The Web site allows visitors to directly e-mail the Foundation for support and resources. Since the revitalization of the Web site in July 2008, 5,695 visitors have benefited from it.

Print/Online

In total, Mr. Corcoran was featured in and/or authored 15 print and/or online articles throughout the year.

Most Notable Print/Online Media:

- "Corcoran Builds a Bridge to Literacy," Greg Toppo, *USA Today*
- "Get it Right on Reading, Bam," John Corcoran, *New York Post* (December 2, 2008)
- "From Non-Reader to Acclaimed Author, John Corcoran Keeps Turning Pages," *The Catalyst*, National Institute for Literacy newsletter
- "How Rotary Is Teaching Johnny (and Jenny) to Read," *The Rotarian*
- "Bridge to Literacy, 'No Child, or Adult, Left Behind,'" David W. Kirkpatrick, *U.S. Freedom Foundation* newsletter
- "YOU," *South Africa Huisgenoot* (Afrikaans)

As a result of Mr. Corcoran speaking on the Black Caucus panel and the release of his published books, he had the opportunity to do 43 radio and six television interviews, with several of these appearances broadcast on a national scale.



Interview with Tavis Smiley at KCET (PBS) in Hollywood, California.

Television and Radio

Most Notable Television Appearances

- CNN Prime News
- *The Tavis Smiley Show*, KCET Los Angeles (PBS)

In *The Bridge to Literacy*, John Corcoran provides us with a well-integrated, state-of-the-art assessment of the causes, determinants, and consequences of reading failure from a very personal perspective—his own.

Paula Tallal, PhD
Co-director
Center for Molecular and
Behavioral Neuroscience
Rutgers University

- "Retired Teacher Reveals He Was Illiterate Until Age 48," San Diego 10 News (ABC)
- *Fox and Friends*, Fox News (FOX)
- *Daybreak*, KATV Little Rock, Arkansas (ABC)

Most Notable Radio

- *Alvin Augustus Jones Show* (Paradise Radio Network)
- *As You Think* (The Catholic Channel XM 159)
- *Bev Smith Show* (AURN)
- *Chicago Connections*, (WBBM-FM, CBS)
- *David Smith Exchange* (WICC)
- *Eye on Books*, Bill Thompson, Washington, D.C. (NPR)
- "The Pain of Illiteracy" *Focus on the Family* (Family Talk XM 170)
- *Good Morning, Texas* (KERA)
- *Jack Rice Show* (WCCO-AM)
- *Morning Edition* (WSIU-FM, NPR)
- *Mornings with Lorri and Larry* (FamilyNet XM 161)
- Northeast Public Radio (WAMC NPR/PRI)
- *Oprah & Friends*, "Overcoming Illiteracy," with Dr. Robin Smith (Oprah Radio XM 156)
- *Ocala Live/Health Matters* (WOCA-AM)
- *Outlook with Fred Dove* (BBC)
- Sunday Magazine/NTJ Morning Magazine (WKYE-FM/WNTJ-AM)
- *Tell Me More with Michel Martin* (NPR)
- *The Doug Noll Show* (WSRADIO)
- *The Kathryn Zox Lunchtime Talk* (WMET-AM)
- *The Steve Harvey Morning Show* (WBLS)
- *Urban Business Report with Donna Wilson* (Bloomberg LP)
- *Viewpoints* (MediaTracks Communications)



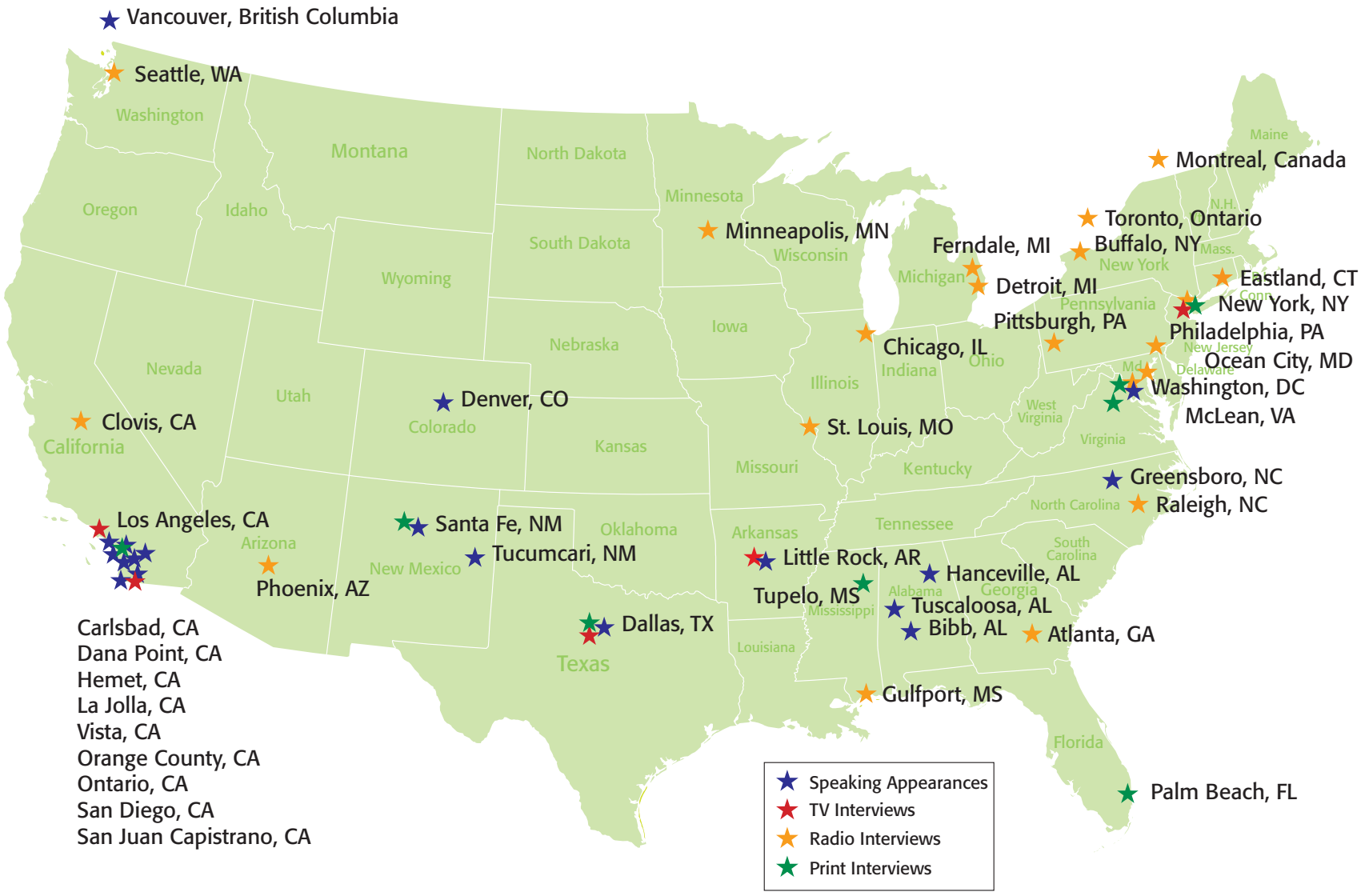
John Corcoran on NPR's *Tell Me More with Michel Martin*

The re-release of *The Teacher Who Couldn't Read* prompted re-airings of successful interviews from its initial release in 1997. For example, a radio interview with *Focus on the Family's* Dr. James Dobson re-aired twice in the past year.

Mr. Corcoran and his wife, Kathy, describe his former struggle with illiteracy in the interview, and as a result hundreds of parents whose children deal with learning difficulties contacted the John Corcoran Foundation for resources, encouragement, and advice. They were provided with unique and honest insight about these challenges and given hope concerning the capabilites of their children both in education and daily life.

A conversation with Mr. Corcoran makes a significant difference to a person who has dealt with illiteracy in some form or another because they are reassured and motivated by a person with a unique first-hand experience who can offer tried-and-true solutions to such a sensitive issue.

Public Awareness Outreach Map



Summary

After the publication of an article or airing of a television or radio segment on Mr. Corcoran, the Web site hits, e-mails, and phone calls to the Foundation significantly increased. For example, immediately after the interview, the John Corcoran Foundation Web site had an unprecedented number of 972 hits. Adults contacted the Foundation to find help with illiteracy for themselves, their children, or other adult family members.

The John Corcoran Foundation personally responds to each individual with resources and encouragement.

SERVICES: CREATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESOURCES

Tutoring

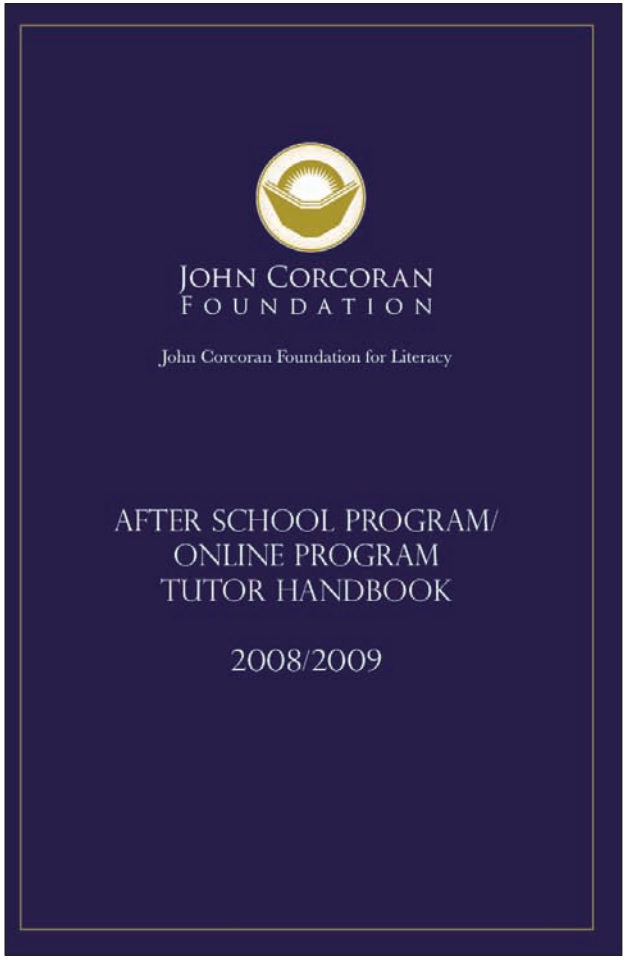
The focus of the John Corcoran Foundation Supplemental Education Services Program (SES) is the provision of reading instruction for students, especially related to development of phonemic awareness and word attack skills. This instruction affects improvement in all aspects of English Language Arts.

The number of students tutored during the past two years, during the 2006/07 and 2007/08 school years, was 580. Of these students, 496 completed the entire tutoring program, and 425 made significant growth. The John Corcoran Foundation has found that its program has been effective with English Language Learners (ELL) as well as Special Education students.

In 2008, 275 students were tutored in Denver, Colorado. We also launched pilot programs in Southern California collectively serving 76 students in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Anaheim.

Methodology

Because of Mr. Corcoran's own experience of falling behind literate classmates, instruction is always designed to meet individualized student needs and goals. The John Corcoran Foundation has seen these programs impact student achievement through six years of SES programming.



The coupling of his direct experience and observation leads The John Corcoran Foundation to support the learning of phonics.

Students are tutored in small group settings in schools, in community-based sites, or using an online tutoring program.

In a school or site-based program, to improve literacy skills, students spend half of the instructional session working with tutors in small groups and half of the instructional session using programs on computers. In site-based programs, tutors monitor progress and assist students with lessons they have problems completing. Tutors also work with students in small groups to facilitate peer learning in reading comprehension and test-taking skills.

With online programs, students are provided with literacy software affiliated with professional scientifically and evidenced based research and design consultants, and in accordance with the critical elements of reading as defined by the National Reading Panel, to use at home or in sites. In addition to their daily independent learning, students are contacted by tutors weekly to work together via a Web-conferencing program.

Online instruction is offered to students who do not have access to this program in their schools or community centers. This can also be socially advantageous for middle and high school students who may need to visit phonics/phonemic awareness instruction, but feel embarrassed about it. By using computer programs, they can develop these skills in privacy.

> The most reliable indicator of a reading disability is the inability to decode single words. . . . Phonological processing is the primary ability area where children with reading disabilities differ from other children."
>
> The National Reading Panel Report (2000) which reviewed 38 controlled studies of phonics instruction.

Instructional Programs

Computer programs used include Lexia®, My Reading Coach®, and Reading Plus®. These are research-based programs that provide practice for students to develop decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency skills through game-formatted and interactive program modules. The three software programs used have been proven to effectively improve reading proficiency through published research, scientific studies, and peer-reviewed journals. Extensive reports made available through these programs make it possible to closely monitor student progress.

> Mindplay's My Reading Coach® is, hands-down, the very best reading/literacy, cross-age program we've seen yet . . . full featured, with everything from assessment and placement testing, phonics and grammar lessons; with bilingual . . . and IEP features, this program will ensure success in struggling readers of all ages.
>
> 2008 BESSIE Award (Best Education Software)

Summary of Results

In the past year, students in grade levels 1–7 received our program's instruction for six months, from November 2007 through April 2008. According to the Woodcock Reading Mastery Word Attack Test, students typically improved by 1.43 to 2.6 grade levels in reading, with the fourth graders peaking the group at a 2.6 grade level gain. For example, a fourth-grade student reading at a third-grade level at the time of the initial assessment was reading at or above the fourth-grade reading level

after direct instruction through the computer program. *Over six months with the program, students were gaining, on average, two grade levels in reading.*

The fourth grade advancement is especially significant because students who struggle with literacy in fourth grade will also struggle with literature-centric subjects that are stepped up dramatically in fourth grade, such as history and science, as well as the expectation of reading lengthy chapter books for book reports and other projects.

TRAINING AND MENTORING

Rotary International, with over 1.2 million members, has "Literacy for All" as one of its main service themes. Because of this core direction, Rotary Clubs throughout the United States and Canada have supported the John Corcoran Foundation by inviting Mr. Corcoran to speak at local club meetings, District Conferences, and Zone Institutes and also by circulating his books.

Rotary's Computer Assisted Literacy Solution (CALS) initiative employs "the power of technology both to reach people and to remove some of the stigma of illiteracy," according to Rotary International's, 2007–08 president, Wilf Wilkinson. One of the computer programs supported by Rotary's CALS is delivered using Autoskill's Academy of Reading,® which has been a valuable resource of the Foundation in response to inquiries from parents and adults seeking reading instruction. Academy of Reading received the District Administration Reader's Choice Top 100 Products 2008 award.

Mr. Corcoran also served as a judge for the X-Factor Autoskill contest, which offered a $20,000 cash prize and $30,000 in software and professional development to the winner. As a result, Mr. Corcoran also shared an interview in the *Autoskill District Administration* magazine.

A highlight of the year was Kaplan Publishing facilitating Mr. Corcoran as the Keynote Speaker at the Sales Summit of Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), the nation's oldest and largest children's and family nonprofit literacy organization. RIF delivers free books and resources to underserved children and families.

> In *The Bridge to Literacy*, John clearly presents the challenge we face today. At the same time, he gives us many possible opportunities to meet and solve that challenge. In so doing, he has issued a clarion call for action—for all of us to join together to build the bridge to literacy.
>
> Wilfred J. Wilkinson
> Rotary International President, 2007–08



John Corcoran's message inspires adult learners and tutors.

CONCLUSION

America has the opportunity to serve as a global, proactive model for universal literacy and the John Corcoran Foundation is committed to seeing this happen.

After a successful year of tutoring, media appearances, speeches, interviews, and support for literacy providers nationwide, the Foundation will move forward with its vision to provide each individual, regardless of age or background, with the opportunity to be fully equipped with the basic skills necessary to become a success in all aspects of life, including education, work, and community.

Oftentimes, adults and youth who struggle with illiteracy need to know that they are not alone. The John Corcoran Foundation makes a conscious effort to respond to inquiries or communication from individuals around the world who seek answers and resources, long for encouragement, and want to share their personal stories. Their experiences are listened to, valued, and handled in a gentle, confidential manner.

Mr. Corcoran is approachable and honest about his journey before and after crossing the "Bridge to Literacy" in the hope that it will change the lives of millions in the subculture of illiteracy in addition to our nation's education system.

Beyond awareness, the Foundation is making a difference to students and their families by providing the direct and proper reading instruction they need to excel in the classroom. These students are no longer hiding, feeling embarrassed, or dreading school, but are confident and capable to tackle the academic challenges that lie ahead.

For those who have already passed through the school system or dropped out, the Foundation creates awareness about their significant numbers, offers support, and encourages adults to learn to read, regardless of their age.

Teaching reading is economically and socially sound for our nation, but above all, it is an act of love and a demonstration of the value we place on human life, allowing each individual to reach his or her fullest potential by providing the basic skills necessary for success.

With gratitude, Mr. Corcoran, the Foundation's tutors, partners, board members, and supporters continue to promote literacy as their essential duty and investment in America's future.

Just as in 2008, sharing the precious gift of literacy with all will remain the dream and goal of the John Corcoran Foundation in the years to come.

Future Directions:

- Providing computers as incentives to students
- Expanding Board of Directors and Advisory Board
- Expanding tutor-training capacity
- Expanding online tutoring
- Administrative staff development
- Succession planning

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENSE: JANUARY THROUGH DECEMBER, 2008

The John Corcoran Foundation exists in response to the visibility Mr. Corcoran has brought to the issue of literacy on a national scale for more than ten years. His speaking engagements and media interviews are vital outreach components for supporting direct service projects.

In order to prevent personal appearances from overshadowing the work of the Foundation, contributions to the Foundation are not used to support speaking expenses. In 2008, numerous hosts covered Mr. Corcoran's direct expense to enable charitable giving and grants received by the Foundation to be targeted exclusively to programs.

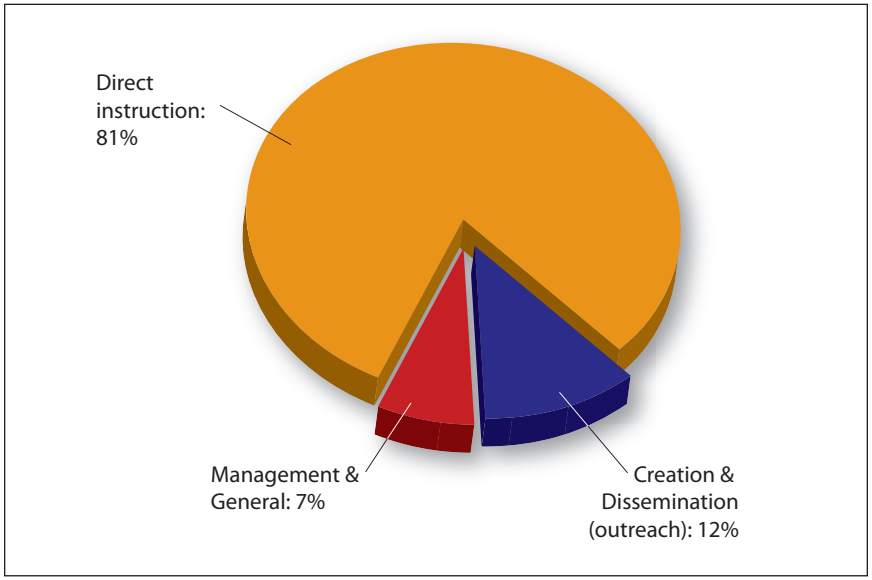
Eighty-one percent of our program expense represents the tutoring programs in Colorado and California, through which students receive direct instruction from paid tutors. These low-income students benefit from our tutoring program because they lack the resources to afford the level, depth, and quality of instruction they need.

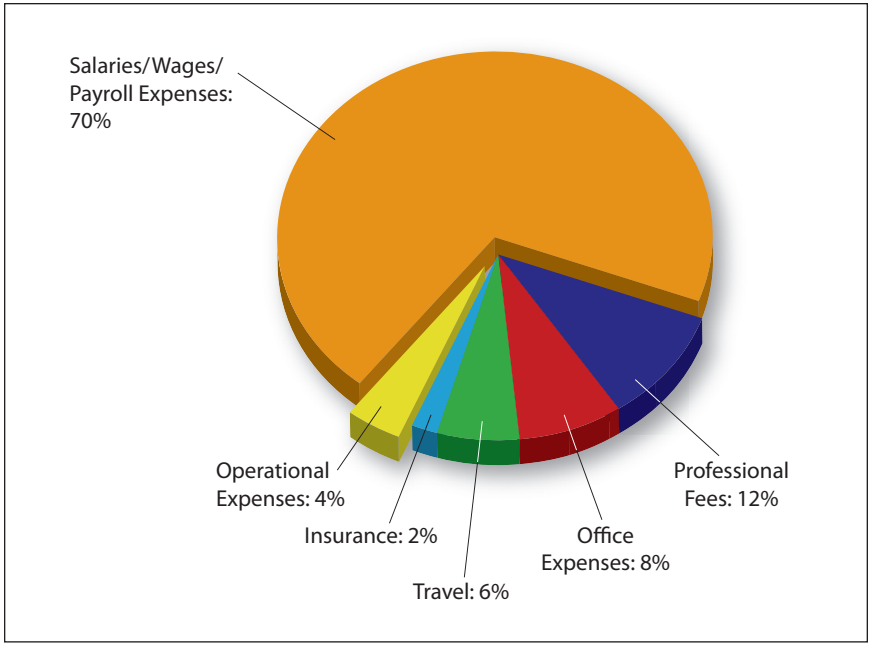
At an average expense of only $169 per week for tutors, supplies, and technology, these low-performing students have dramatically increased their performance as measured by standard literacy assessment tools.

Illiterate adults are generally respected as being hard workers with the creativity to navigate life, but their deficiencies in reading and writing impact our nation's gross national product, our schools' ranking on the worldwide stage, and the health of children beginning in infancy. We believe that $169 is not a lot to save a child from a lifetime of illiteracy. Each child's victory is a win for all of us.

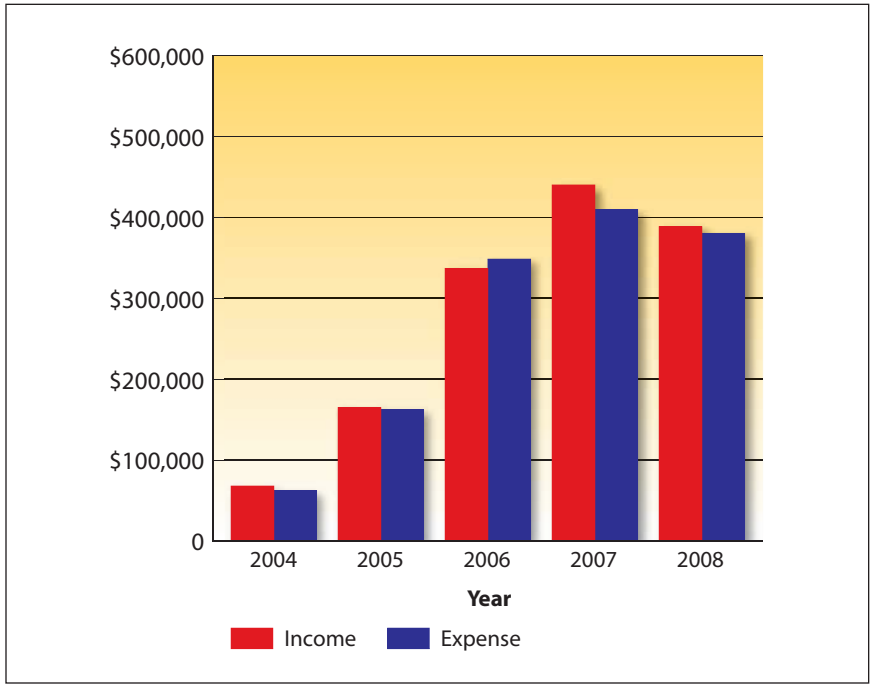
The following charts summarize the Foundation's program expenses. For further detail, please see our 990 at www.guidestar.org.

2008 Expenses





Five Year Income and Expense History



Across the past five years, our income for gifts, grants, and contributions totaled $1,399,007, and our expenses totaled $1,363,666.55.

DISTINGUISHED DONORS AND PARTNERS

Special thanks to our generous donors

Michael Bellcosa

Betty L. Morris

Orvil Roop

John Underwood

Special thanks to our partners

Autoskill

Kaplan Publishing

My Reading Coach

National Institute for Literacy

Ounce of Prevention Reading Center

Rotary International

San Diego Council on Literacy

The Dyslexia Foundation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ADVISORY BOARD

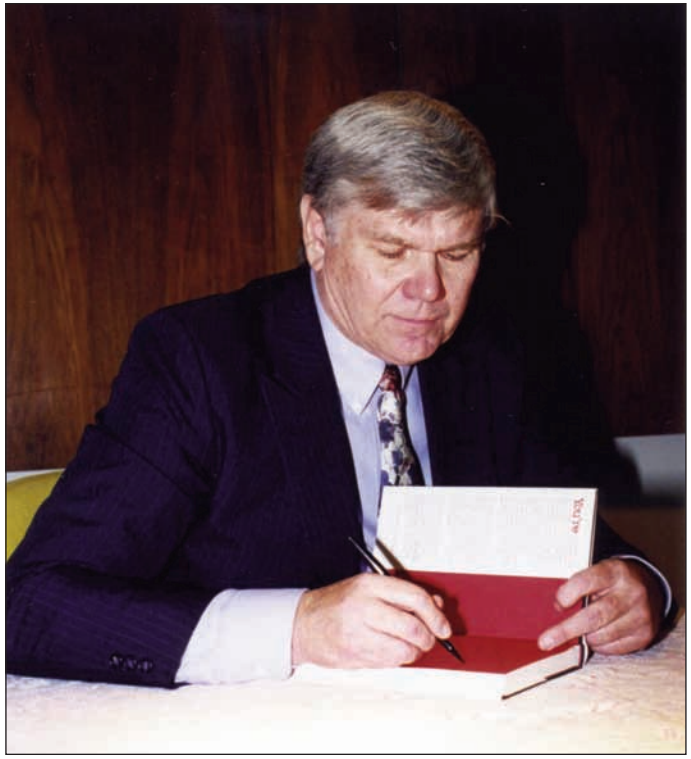
Board of Directors

Kathleen Corcoran, RN, Oceanside Unified School District, School Nurse, 25 years

Maureen Fleming, Senior Services Supervisor, Oceanside, California

Thom Fleming, San Diego Unified School District, Secondary and Special Education Teacher, 35 years

Colleen Mertes, RN, Community Bible Study Leader



Advisory Board

Fran Thompson

Vince Walter

Officers and directors receive no compensation for services performed on behalf of the Foundation.

LEGAL NOTICES

John Corcoran is a published author and nationally recognized speaker on the topic of literacy. Fees and other forms of compensation earned by Mr. Corcoran for such activities are generally conducted outside the scope of the Foundation's charter and are paid directly to him. Any copyrights, trademarks, or royalties established by Mr. Corcoran, personally, remain the property of Mr. Corcoran.

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JOHN CORCORAN FOUNDATION



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TESTIMONIALS

"The teacher congratulated me for my son's reading progress. My neighbors were amazed that he was reading much better than their older children. They asked me why, and I told them about the tutoring program. They want their children to participate next year."

—ADRIAN'S MOM

"Angel really enjoyed the program. He is very shy, but because of his progress and working with the computer, I can see he feels more confident. He really liked his tutor."

—ANGEL'S MOTHER

"I am very satisfied with the program. I liked the fact that he needed to work independently and, because of the type of school he goes to, he really needed the tutoring program. I liked the fact that everything was through the phone and computer and nobody had to come to our house. I am very satisfied."

—JUN'S MOM

"We are all very happy with the program. My son learned a lot and he liked the program. It helped my son to mature by forcing him to work independently. We are very grateful for the program."

—KEVIN'S MOM

"I really like the program because I didn't have to worry about having someone coming to my house, and she was able to study any time. She feels very confident in herself now that she can read better."

—MICHELLE'S MOM

"My son used to have a tutor coming to the house twice a week, but he did not learn anything. With your program and the computer, he was learning and he liked working with the computer. Because of my other son's disability, not having to take my son to school or library to be tutored was very convenient."

—MARCO'S MOM