

SOAR

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

The SOAR program is focused on providing strategies, opportunities, advantages and resources for pre-school aged children and their families in Muhlenberg County, with a focus on early childhood literacy and kindergarten readiness. SOAR both hosts and supports over 30 community events each year and provides support and programs for local providers including Head Start, preschool and daycare programs. To support early childhood literacy, SOAR and the Foundation have given away over 260,000 books to children in Muhlenberg County over the past 10 years. SOAR has also implemented many county-wide educational programs for children, some of which are highlighted below.

SOAR is a program of Felix E. Martin, Jr. Foundation in partnership with the Muhlenberg County Board of Education.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER

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New Baby Literacy Packets:

Through this program, the families of newborn Muhlenberg County children receive a packet, encouraging reading from day one of a child's life. Each packet includes items encouraging families to begin reading to their newborns. These include a parenting book, baby books, and a library card as well as bibs, and rattles all featuring literacy messages.



Read15 Awareness Campaign:

Read 15 is SOAR's county-wide awareness campaign promoting early childhood literacy across the county. Utilizing resources from Read Aloud 15 MINUTES, a national non-profit organization, SOAR seeks to make reading aloud for at least 15 minutes the new standard for families.

FELIX E. MARTIN JR.
FOUNDATION

SCHOOL READINESS BEGINS AT HOME



Key Programs

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library:

All Muhlenberg County children under 5 years of age are eligible to participate in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Each month, registered children receive a brand new, age-appropriate book in the mail at no cost to the child or his/her family, creating a home library of up to 60 books for children who are registered at birth. The books instill a love of books and reading from the start of a child's life, and guarantee that every child will have books, regardless of their family's income. This program is run in partnership with the Muhlenberg County Public Library.



READY!
for Kindergarten

READY! for Kindergarten:

The READY! for Kindergarten program is available at no charge to all families who have a child starting kindergarten in Muhlenberg in the fall. Each family attends three classes over the course of the Pre-K year which teaches age-appropriate targets to the parents and caregivers of pre-school children. The families receive learning toys and tools at each session. Along with these toys, the families are taught about desired learning goals and how to "play with a purpose." In recent years, partnerships with the HANDS and First Steps programs and Pathway of Hope have made the program available for Muhlenberg families with children from 1-5 years old.



Books -n- Cream Summer Reading Program:

Books-n-Cream is a weekly summer reading program offered at three locations. Participating children from birth to 5th grade will receive a free book and ice cream coupon every week after reading a featured book of the week. They are also invited to play at learning centers while attending.

Kindergarten Camp:

New in summer 2019, in partnership with Muhlenberg County Schools, SOAR will host a free one-week Kindergarten Camp open to all children who will start kindergarten in Muhlenberg County in fall 2019. The camp, led by certified teachers, will not only give campers a taste of what to expect in kindergarten, but will also give students an opportunity to hone skills they will need to start Kindergarten on track for success.

K-Day Camp:

SOAR initiates a one-day K-Day kindergarten camp at each elementary school in Muhlenberg County. This one-day event allows incoming students to tour the school, meet their teachers, eat in the cafeteria, and sometimes even ride a school bus, alleviating some of the fear of the first day of school for the County's youngest students.

Community Events:

Community events promote both SOAR & Imagination Library within the community, while distributing books and early childhood education information to Muhlenberg County Families. SOAR initiated, sponsored, or participated in 32 events in 2017-18 serving nearly 11,000 children and their families. At these community events, over 11,000 books were distributed. SOAR plans to be part of at least 25-30 events during 2018-19.

Community Book Shelves and Little Free Libraries:

SOAR provides and stocks 13 Little Free Libraries across Muhlenberg County as well as bookshelves in waiting areas in ten locations, encouraging families to read to their children while they wait.

Mayor's Reading Club / Rotary Reads:

The Mayor's Reading Club invites local mayors and the Rotary Club to visit all five elementary schools as well as several daycares to read to students. Local mayors will visit their neighborhood school up to three times each year and will read a book to a pre-school or kindergarten classroom. Rotary members schedule visits to read to 2nd graders throughout the county.

The Reading Posse:

This program, which provides free children's books to be given out from all local law enforcement vehicles, was originally created to allow First Responders an opportunity to combat illiteracy in our communities while fostering a positive relationship with local community members in many of the most remote and poverty stricken areas of the county. It has been so successful that the program has expanded to offer the service from EMS vehicles, school buses and even dentists and barber shops.

Reach Out and Read with Local Pediatricians:

At each pediatric visit at most local clinics and doctor's offices, doctors advise Muhlenberg children and their families about the importance of reading and early childhood literacy. Children receive a free book at each visit.

