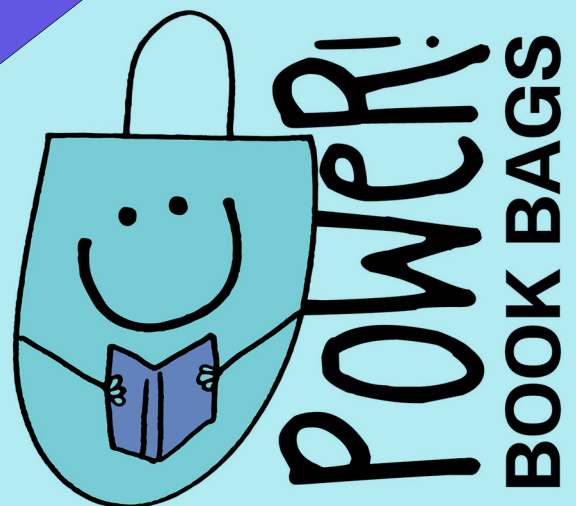


Annual Report 2021



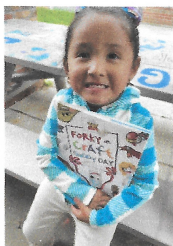
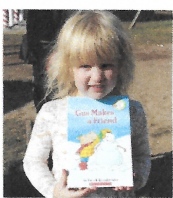
www.powerbookbags.org

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Dear Friends,

"We are more than JUST books." This is the slogan we've added to our brochure based on feedback from our volunteers. It's true. We are so much more. Books in the hands of children are VITAL, but there is much more than "just books" that is important and involved in the work that we do. In our community work, we are asked a variety of questions and they always make me think critically about what we do and how we can improve not only our program, but also our communications. Once upon a time, someone said to me, "How do you know what they do with the books? How do you know they aren't burning the books?" Of course, I was fully taken aback and I seriously reflected on that. In the end, my response was, "If that family is *so in need* that they are cold and the books provide warmth, then the books still served a purpose." But you know, more than being put IN a fire (which is highly unlikely), with our books and language & literacy materials, we are trying to provide INNER warmth and set their brains ON fire!

Beyond the beautiful books that we distribute to children – which DO help them think, imagine, experience new language and concepts, and, according to a multitude of research, stimulate cognitive growth – we also provide children with materials to encourage playing and writing. Not only do these activities increase cognition, they also increase language experiences, which are foundational to future life success. FURTHER, playing, writing, and reading provide children with outlets for stress relief AND healthy ways to express emotions while they explore alternative solutions to problems of the moment. Playing, writing, and reading are all well documented ways to help improve COGNITION, LANGUAGE, SELF-ESTEEM, and MENTAL HEALTH.

During the first 5 years of life is when the MOST brain growth happens. 90% of brain development occurs in these early years – more than any other time. The neural connections that are emerging and strengthening during this period aren't just the ones needed for reading. The connections being formed are also ones needed for language, empathy, coping with emotions, and interacting with others. In other words, this is the time when the brain is forming the capacity to be fully human – to cooperate peacefully to solve problems, generate ideas, create, and love!

In the counties we serve, at least 1 out of every 2 children in these first five years of life are living at or just above poverty. While their families are struggling to put food on the table and maintain a home, they are unlikely to have the left-over means to purchase materials for playing, writing, and reading. Without easy access to playing and print materials in the home, stimulation is less available. One of our recent partners at a low-income health clinic told us the story relayed by one of their physicians. The doctor asked a parent of a toddler what the child's favorite toy was. The response was that her little boy loved a spoon. This was not because the child ignored other toys in favor of the spoon, but because the spoon was all there was. Upon receipt of our first delivery to the clinic, the same doctor was elated to immediately share our materials with her families!

Of course, the brain – and the whole child – doesn't stop needing positive stimulation after 5. This is why we have a firm plan. We start our community work with the youngest, and as the children grow, we continue with language and literacy materials in these communities at pantries, preschools, elementary schools, and beyond. Our goal is to provide a long-term, steady supply of language and literacy materials to children in need so they may strengthen their capacity for life.

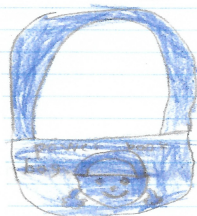
As a grass-roots, volunteer-led and volunteer-powered organization (with one part-time employee), we engage each day to intentionally and systematically make a difference in the lives of children in Michigan using research-driven practices. We are dynamic, constantly striving and improving our work in an effort to find the best methods and materials to achieve our mission. We closely collaborate with our community partners, professionals who are distributing our materials to children and families, taking their feedback to heart while we make adaptations and improvements to fulfill our mission.

Above all, children deserve our careful attention because EVERY CHILD MATTERS. What we do TODAY for children fully impacts children's lives TOMORROW. There is so much work to be done in so many places. We couldn't do what we do without YOU. This thank you note from one of our little friends says it all, "Thanks for seeing my future."

Wishing you all the best in the upcoming year! I look forward to continuing our important work together.

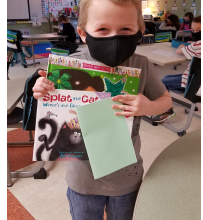
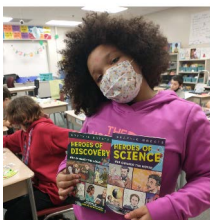
Kara

Dear power book bugs, Thank you for seeing my future. I really enjoyed all of the books!



Kara Murphy Gregory, Ph.D.
Founder and Executive Director





Annual Report 2021

**15,000
Literacy
Bags
Delivered in
2021**

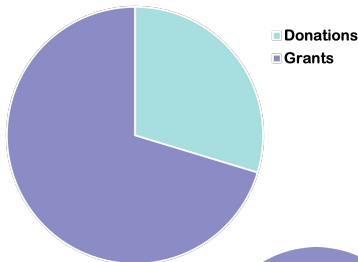


www.powerbookbags.org

**101,000
Books
Delivered to Kids
in 2021**

OUR MISSION IS TO INCREASE CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES WITH LANGUAGE, LITERACY, AND HUMAN INTERACTIONS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES, COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS, AND CONNECT WITH THE WORLD.

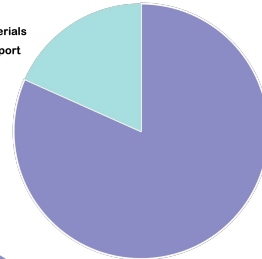
**Income
\$326,713***



*\$166,289 Restricted Funding for 2022

**Expenses
\$183,895**

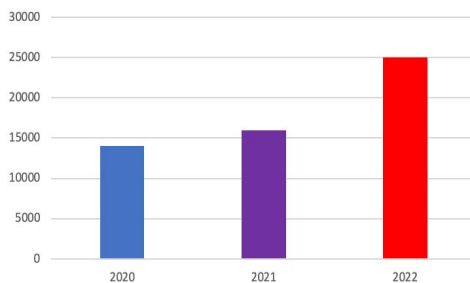
Program Materials
Program Support



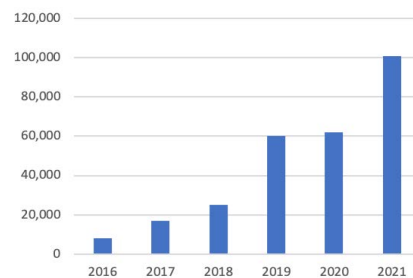
**20
Counties Served**

**Over
12,000
Volunteer
Hours
Logged in 2021**

Number of Children Served



Books DELIVERED to Children





"...PoWeR Book Bags is a truly grassroots and wonderful organization providing literacy materials to youth in our area." Sakura Takano, Rotary Charities, CEO, July 2021.

This lovely endorsement came during an introduction of PoWeR! Book Bags to a new area in which we were eager to "get down to business and help the kids," as one of our favorite volunteers likes to say. We are of course, honored for the kind words. They are also very true. We are so grass-roots that we can't help but remain humble and so VERY GRATEFUL for the lovely community of volunteers, donors, and grantors that have formed around our "little project."

None of our work could happen without a few hundred volunteers logging literally THOUSANDS of hours of VOLUNTEER time working, doing simply everything from ordering, to hauling, sticking books, inventory, sorting, packing, delivering, sewing lovely bags, tying puppet heads, making booklets, addressing envelopes, writing thank yous, crafting grants, planning fundraising and events...the list is never ending and goes on and on. THANKS to our incredible corp of volunteers who worked at home, or outside in chilly weather (as well as lovely majestic days while overlooking the bay), in masks and through all health precautions – we did it again! And we will continue as long as our amazing YOU keep coming back to help (or take away work and return for more!). It is simply a delight to get to know all of you. The smiles, kindness, and encouragement for each other and the new budding friendships that have developed during our volunteer times together while we are working for the common good for children are priceless. It is hard not to be continually overflowing with gratitude!

And to all of our family, friends, neighbors, businesses, and corporations – and those we have yet to meet that are providing funding through donations and grants, – you have our utmost thanks and appreciation. Hopefully, when you look at all of the smiling faces throughout this annual report, you will also feel great satisfaction for your contribution to it all. We have big plans for reaching more of our "littlest learners" in the upcoming year if we can find the means. Stay tuned for the excitement ahead. Together, we can all make it happen – sharing the joy of language and literacy with children to help them grow and flourish. We have only just begun!

Enormous THANKS to our Multitude of Grantors in 2021!

4Front Credit Union*The Amar-Fox Family Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*Baiardi Family Foundation*Beaver Island Elks Lodge*Benzie County Central Schools Educational Foundation*Benzie Sunrise Rotary*Bright Funds*Bui Family Foundation*Charlevoix County Community Foundation*Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Great Start Collaborative *Community Foundation for Mason County*Community Foundation of Grand Traverse Area Focus Fund Grant*Consumers Energy Foundation*COOR/Iosco Great Start Collaborative *Crystal Mountain*Cwik Holly by Golly Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*Dominos*Gaylord Community Schools*Genuine Leelanau Charitable Endowment*Tom Gill Memorial Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*Good Works Grant, Rotary Club of Traverse City*Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council for Antrim*Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council for Benzie*Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council for Kalkaska*Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council for Grand Traverse*Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council for Leelanau*Grand Traverse Department of Health and Human Services Grant*Great Lakes Energy People Fund*Hardman Construction Fund of the Community Foundation for Mason County*Hestia Women's Giving Circle*Nancy Hesting Fund of the Community Foundation for Mason County*Immaculate Conception Catholic Church*ITC*The Kohnert Family Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*Kiwanis Club of Gaylord Foundation*Kiwanis Club of Traverse City*Kiwanis Foundation of Traverse City*The Kiley Family Foundation*Kuehlenthal Beyer Family Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*Lake County Community Foundation Grant (For Community)*Lake County Community Foundation Grant (For Baldwin School)*Lampert Family Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*Leelanau Parenting Communities Grant*Leelanau Township Community Foundation*Ludington Area Schools*Manistee County Community Foundation*Mason-Lake-Oceana Great Start Collaborative*Meijer*Muskegon Elks Lodge*Network for Good*Northeast Community Youth Advisory Council*Northeast Michigan Community Foundation Northeast Women's Giving Circle Fund*Otsego County Cops Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*Otsego County Community United Way*PNC *Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area - Youth Endowment (for Emmet County)*Rock Family Foundation*Rotary Club of Gaylord Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation*The Art and Mary Schmuckal Family Foundation*SEED Grant Rotary Charities Traverse City (with the Northwest Literacy Alliance)*Straits Area Community Foundation *David K.Stites Fund of the Community Foundation for Mason County*Suttons Bay and Bingham Endowment*Suttons Bay-Leelanau County Rotary Club*Traverse Bay Sunrise Rotary Foundation*Traverse City Elks Lodge*UBS Business Solutions*VMware*Wexford-Missaukee-Manistee Great Start Collaborative*Youth Fund of the Otsego Community Foundation *Symantec Software Company*Veritas

