

Beacon On The Scene

Reach Out and Read of Greater New York host 9th annual benefit

By Audrey J. Bernard
Lifestyles/Society Editor

On Wednesday, May 14, supporters of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York gathered to celebrate its 9th annual benefit and silent auction at the trendy Marquee nightclub and proudly raised almost \$100,000 for programs at 160 sites, serving more than 230,000 children living in poverty across the New York Metropolitan region.

"Reach Out and Read is meeting the needs of some of the City's youngest and neediest populations, children six months of age to five years old," said **Traci Lester**, executive director of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York in her welcoming remarks. "Our programs strive to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care."

The event's honorary co-chairs were **Louise and Leonard Riggio**, CEO, Barnes & Noble Booksellers. The event's co-chairs were **Debra Shiau**, All About Books, and **Kiersten Zimmerman**, Scholastic, Inc. **Dana Tyler**, co-anchor of CBS2 News at noon and 6 p.m., served as Mistress of Ceremonies.

During the evening's festivities the 2008 "Volunteer of the Year" award was presented to **Lynna Carnegie**, program director, NYC Department for the Aging's Foster Grandparent Program, that provides loving and experienced tutors and mentors to children and youth with special needs. Among other activities, volunteers go over schoolwork, reinforce values, teach parenting skills to young mothers, and care for premature infants and children with disabilities.

"We honored the New York City Foster Grandparent Program for its role in helping Reach Out and Read programs deliver the message about the importance of literacy on early childhood development," said Lester. "We rely on the support of volunteer programs, like the Foster Grandparent Program, to read to children in Reach Out and Read clinic waiting areas and model reading aloud to families and children, while working alongside Reach Out and Read program coordinators and mentor families."

Noted children's book author and guest speaker **Vera B. Williams** presented the 2009 literacy champion award to **Susan Straub**, founder of the Read to Me Program, accepted on her behalf by **Deanna Pacelli**. The Read to Me Program, Inc. is fundamentally a series of interactive workshops that aims to provide parents with pleasurable book-related experiences in order to gain the confidence to read early and often at home.

Other highlights of the enjoyable evening included a silent auction with terrific prizes



Lynna Scott Carnegie, director, NYC Department for the Aging's Foster Grandparent Program and recipient, ROR GNY volunteer of the year award; **Traci Lester**, executive director, ROR of Greater New York; **Dana Tyler**, Mistress of Ceremonies and anchor CBS2 News; **Deanna Pacelli**, Read To Me Program Inc.; **Vera B. Williams**, guest speaker and children's book author



Friends from Barnes & Noble Booksellers



Michelle Nero; **Vera B. Williams**, guest speaker and children's book author

including vacations in Panama and Vermont; tickets to the Michael Kors Spring Fashion Show; Manolo Blahnik gift certificate; Bloomingdale's gift card; Alexis Bittar Jewelry; Lambertson Truex Hobo bag; Tory Burch Tote; U.S. Open Tennis Tickets; VIP Tickets to the Colbert Report; and many more items.

The evening's chapter book sponsor was Barnes & Noble Booksellers; pop-up book sponsor was Scholastic, Inc.; board

book sponsors were Kings County Hospital and Lutheran Health Care; and leadership sponsors included Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center, Elizabeth Fine, Dr. Leora Mogilner, Mr. Richard Linhart and Family, Jack E. Pace III and Anthony Yoseloff Foundation.

Benefactor sponsors included **Jennifer Assa-Kass**, **Maria Gotsch**, **Eileen and Vincent FitzPatrick**, **Evelyn Lipper**, New York Methodist Hospital, **Dr. Carmen Ramos-**



Ann Sand and Kathleen Hopkins, ROR Greater NY board members; **Debra Shiau**, All About Books; **Linda van Schaick**, Bellevue Hospital Center

Bonoan, FAAP, **Susan Straub** and **Trans Perfect**.

Eileen FitzPatrick, longtime Reach Out and Read of Greater New York board member, chaired the benefit committee whose members included **Karine Apollon**, **Ana Holwell**, **Ruth**

Hunt, **Kathleen Kane**, **Susan Kaufman**, **Dr. Lewis Krata**, **Michelle Lyng**, **Jack E. Pace III**, **Stacey M. Palker**, **Anne Schoknecht**, **Debra Shiau**, **Lucia Smith**, **Caroline Widman**, **Laura Winn Clark** and **Kiresten Zimmerman**.



Traci Lester, executive director, ROR of Greater New York; **Kathleen Collins**, secretary, board of directors, ROR of Greater New York



Supporters of ROR at Marquee party

(Photos: Gerald Peart)