



**Contact:**

**Traci Lester, Executive Director**

**Reach Out and Read of Greater New York**

Phone: (212) 803-3334

Cell: (917) 825-8964

E-mail: [tlester@reachoutandreadnyc.org](mailto:tlester@reachoutandreadnyc.org)

**Senator Suzi Oppenheimer Visits Reach Out and Read Program  
at Sound Shore Medical Center of Westchester Children's Medical Group  
*Senator Oppenheimer Reads Aloud to Children in Support of Early Literacy***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – (New Rochelle, NY) October 7, 2009** -- Doctors at Sound Shore Medical Center of Westchester Children's Medical Group are sending families home from check-ups with free books and a very important prescription – “read aloud to your children.” **Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, who represents some of the families served by the hospital in the 37<sup>th</sup> New York Senatorial District and chairs the Senate Education Committee, paid a visit to Sound Shore Medical Center Children's Medical Group** to follow doctors' orders by reading to families and children who participate in its Reach Out and Read (ROR) early literacy program. She also used the opportunity to tour the facility and see firsthand how ROR helps instill a love of reading in area children.

“Being here today brings back so many fond memories of reading aloud to my four children,” said Senator Suzi Oppenheimer. “The ability to read and comprehend is fundamental to a child's success in school and in life. That's why I'm so proud of my long association with the Reach Out and Read program, which enlists the support of physicians and hospitals to impart a lifelong love of reading in our young children.”

ROR works with medical providers across the greater New York area in advising parents about the importance of reading aloud to their children and provides free books at each check-up for children ages 6 months to 5 years. The books are new, carefully chosen, and developmentally appropriate -- starting with board books for babies and moving on to more complex picture books for preschoolers. Through ROR, each child starts kindergarten with a home library of up to 10 books and a parent who has learned through every well-child visit about the importance of books and reading with their children. Additionally, volunteers read stories with children in clinic waiting rooms, thereby modeling for parents reading aloud techniques.

John R. Spicer, President and CEO of Sound Shore Medical Center commenting said, “Our participation in the Reach Out & Read Program has been very positive.” He continued, “We look at the whole person and consider this Program vital to the overall development and well being of our youngest patients.”

Margaret Levitt, MD, who is a pediatrician and Director of the ROR Program at Sound Shore, said “This year Sound Shore Medical Center is celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the Reach Out and Read Program. Our

goal is to distribute beautiful books to our patients and encourage our parents to read to their children. It is a daily pleasure to see a child's smile when a book is given."

#### **About Reach Out and Read of Greater New York**

**Sound Shore Medical Center** is one of three program sites in the 37th New York Senatorial District that participate in ROR, providing books to more than 3,000 children annually. Across the region, 176 ROR program sites serve over 277,000 infants, toddlers and preschoolers each year and distribute over 454,000 books. For more Information about ROR of Greater New York visit our website at [www.reachoutandreadnyc.org](http://www.reachoutandreadnyc.org).

#### **About Reach Out and Read**

Reach Out and Read is a national, nonprofit program that is working to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care. ROR trains medical providers to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud and to give books to children at check-ups from 6 months to 5 years, with a special emphasis on children growing up in poverty. Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, ROR has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. Peer-reviewed studies indicate that parents who get books and literacy counseling from their doctors and nurses are more likely to read to their young children, read to them more often, and provide more books in the home. Low-income children exposed to the program have shown improvements in language development, a critical component of school readiness.

Since 1989, more than 52,000 pediatricians, nurses, residents and health professionals have been trained in the ROR model of early-literacy promotion. This year, ROR will provide over 6 million books to more than 3.8 million children, at more than 4,500 hospitals and health centers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. For more information about Reach Out and Read visit [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org).

#### **About Sound Shore Medical Center of Westchester**

Sound Shore Medical Center (SSMC) is a 252-bed, community-based, teaching hospital located at 16 Guion Place in New Rochelle. Since its founding in 1892, SSMC has served the diverse medical needs of the surrounding community and region. We are a major teaching affiliate of New York Medical College, member of the Sound Shore Health System and Pinnacle Healthcare and accredited by The Joint Commission, the nation's oldest and largest hospital accreditation agency.

We are identified as a Center of Excellence for Bariatric Surgery as well as 1st Trimester Antepartum Screening, and approved by the Commission on Cancer of the American College of Surgeons for our high-quality, comprehensive cancer programs - a distinction held by only 25% of hospitals treating cancer patients. In addition our Sleep Center is accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. We are designated by New York State as an Area Trauma Center, a Perinatal Hospital with Level 3 maternal and neonatal intensive care services, and Stroke Center.

Sound Shore Medical Center clinical results on heart failure, pneumonia, heart attack, and surgical patients, as reported by the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, reflect our care as better than the New York State and U.S. averages in many measures, and in a number the outcomes rank us in the top 10% of the hospitals in the country. We are home to the Jacee Lynn Cappelli Diabetes Center and the Elaine and Melvin Merians Diabetes Education and Conference Center. Also on our campus is the Schaffer Extended Care Center, which provides 50 beds for short-term rehabilitation patients and 100 for long-term residents. To learn more about SSMC, visit <http://www.soundshore.org/> or for a Physician Referral, call MDs-LINE (914-637-5473).

**Additional Contacts:**

**Trish Feathers, Assistant Director of Community Relations**

**Sound Shore Medical Center**

Phone: (914) 365-3597

E-mail: [fathers@sshsw.org](mailto:fathers@sshsw.org)

**Debra Lagapa, Press Secretary**

**Office of Senator Suzi Oppenheimer**

NY Senatorial District 37

Phone: (914) 934-5250

Cell: (914) 715-3125

E-mail: [lagapa@senate.state.ny.us](mailto:lagapa@senate.state.ny.us)



**On Wednesday, October 7, 2009, Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, with assistance from a translator (Rocio Montero seated to her right), read to children at Sound Shore Medical Center of Westchester Children's Medical Group.**

Photo courtesy of Senator Suzi Oppenheimer's Office

Hi Res JPEG available via email. Contact: Debra Lagapa at [lagapa@senate.state.ny.us](mailto:lagapa@senate.state.ny.us)

[www.reachoutandreadnyc.org](http://www.reachoutandreadnyc.org)