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**NY State and City Representatives Visit Children at Area Pediatric Centers  
as Part of Reach Out and Read Early Literacy Awareness Week**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – (New York, NY) August 12, 2009** – Early Literacy Awareness Week was launched with help from **New York State Assemblymembers Jose Rivera, Richard N. Gottfried and Linda Rosenthal; New York State Senator Tom Duane; New York City Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott, and New York City Councilmember Rosie Mendez.** They all helped send families home from their pediatric check-ups with a very important prescription: “read aloud to your children.”

The visits were part of **Reach Out and Read of Greater New York’s Early Literacy Awareness Week**, which is hosted events throughout the City August 9-15, 2009.

- **NY State Assemblyman Jose Rivera** read to children at the Morris Heights Health Center in the Bronx on Monday **August 10<sup>th</sup>**. “Our communities are facing tough economic times and families are working multiple jobs to make ends meet,” Assemblyman Rivera explained during his visit. “Children in our community are already deprived of a well-rounded education because of the inequities in our education system. Despite our busy schedules, it is now more important than ever that we take our time and invest in the early literacy of our children. I am thrilled to support this great venture and to spend time with the children and staff of the Morris Heights Health Center. We should be thankful to the people who dedicate their time and talents to make the lives and future of today’s children better.”
- **NY City Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott** and **NY City Councilmember Rosie Mendez** visited children at Beth Israel Medical Center in Union Square on Tuesday **August 11<sup>th</sup>**. Deputy Mayor Walcott presented a proclamation acknowledging ROR GNY’s outstanding efforts to promote early literacy. At the reading Councilmember Mendez said “it’s great to have a partnership of groups like Reach Out and Read and Beth Israel Pediatric Associates encouraging families in my district to spend time reading together. Parents who read stories aloud to their kids provide a strong, positive influence and build a foundation for a lifetime of learning.”
- **NY State Assemblymembers Richard N. Gottfried and Linda Rosenthal** along with **Senator Tom Duane** read together with children at the Ryan-Chelsea Clinton Community Health Center on Tuesday **August 11<sup>th</sup>**. Assemblyman Gottfried, who represents the Chelsea and Clinton neighborhoods and Chairs the NY State Assembly Health Committee, shared that “Reach Out and Read does fantastic work to promote early literacy by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud. Working in pediatric exam rooms and health centers across the nation gets the program to where the kids are, and helps make the visit better for child and parent.” During her reading, Assemblywoman Rosenthal stated that “it is crucial that parents imbue their children with a love of reading as early in their young lives as possible. Parents and children reading together not only strengthens the bond between them, but it also sets kids on the path to the lifelong learning that occurs when they pick-up a book and become immersed in a wonderful story. My parents always read books to me when I was a child and I continue to love reading to this day.” Senator Duane concluded the reading session by stating “Reach Out and Read gives parents the tools and encouragement they need to make

reading aloud with their children a much-loved part of their daily lives. The relationship with books that Reach Out and Read fosters is essential and enduring. Reading to your children is fundamental.”

Pediatricians at the medical facilities partner with Reach Out and Read of Greater New York (ROR GNY) in advising parents from low-income communities about the importance and benefits of reading aloud to their children.

- **Dr. Wanda McCoy** stated “at Morris Heights Health Center (MHHC), early literacy is a standard component of pediatric services. We value the special relationship between parents and their child’s doctor. In the first years of a child’s life, our doctors are important role models for parents, showing them why reading is important and how it can instill a life-long love of books. It’s our belief that a child’s love of reading is born out of the home, can be nurtured in the clinic, and then can reach its full potential in formal education.”
- “It was an honor to have Councilmember Rosie Mendez at our practice and we appreciate her support for such an important program,” said **Dr. Robin Jacobson**, Reach Out and Read Medical Consultant. “Her visit shows that the goal of promoting reading because of its impact on a child’s future education is shared by us all.”
- “As a pediatrician, I know that children’s health is about more than growth charts and booster shots,” said **Dr. Yasmin Hassan**, medical provider at the Ryan/Chelsea-Clinton Community Health Center. “The Reach Out and Read program helps me build relationships with my patients, and helps them grow up to be healthier adults. There is no greater reward than watching parents become strong and confident advocates for their child’s health and education, and seeing the joy children feel when they get a new book.”

**58% of New York area children ages 0-5 living in poverty are not read to aloud daily, significantly decreasing their opportunities for developing important language and cognitive skills, as well as building motivation, curiosity and memory.** ROR GNY programs provide 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 GNY, 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.

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

Across the New York City 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 the Morris Heights Health Center**

Since 1981, Morris Heights Health Center (MHHC) has been a leading provider of primary healthcare to Morris Heights and the surrounding areas. For over a quarter of a century, MHHC has provided quality primary healthcare services to all members of the community, including the medically, socially, and economically disadvantaged. With a mission to be the vanguard for high-quality, affordable and accessible healthcare for all, MHHC serves more than 60,000 patients annually throughout eight zip codes in the South Bronx community. 76% of the population lives at or under the poverty level and

35% of the people are under the age of 14 years. The community is diverse, with a population that is 61% Latino, 31% African-American, .5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% White, and 6.5% people of other ethnicities.

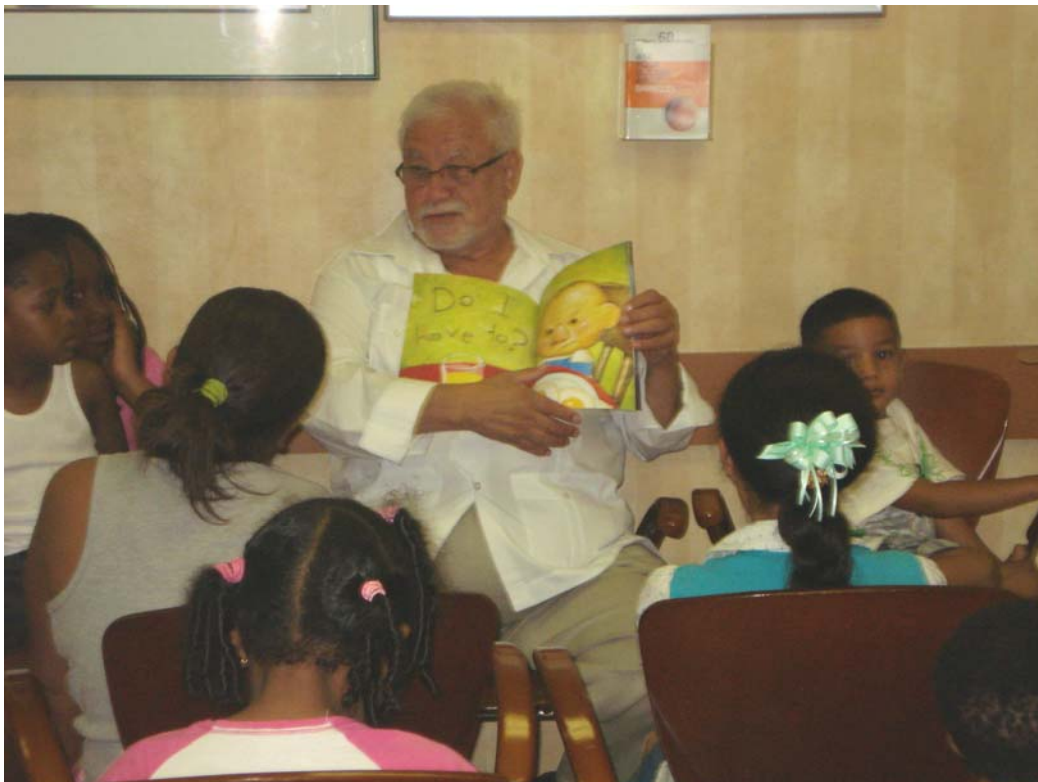
Literacy promotion has become an important step to the goals of Morris Heights Health Center as a community development leader. In 2004, MHHC launched its first pediatric literacy program by joining the Reach Out and Read of Greater NY Coalition. With the support of ROR GNY, MHHC staff, generous donors, and the Morris Heights community, MHHC has expanded to operate childhood literacy programs in all three of its health centers in the South Bronx, distributing over 17,500 books to pediatric patients and their families over the past five years.

#### **About Beth Israel Pediatric Associates**

Beth Israel Pediatric Associates is an outpatient practice of Beth Israel Medical Center that aims to provide the highest quality care and to promote optimal child health. The nine pediatricians are experienced in up to-date care for patients from birth through adolescence and are all board certified. The pediatricians are especially interested in breastfeeding, maternal-infant bonding, and keeping children safe and healthy. General pediatricians saw children at about 28,000 visits last year. We also have a wide variety of pediatric specialty providers in the practice who see patients with more complex or chronic medical problems. The entire staff is very helpful and cares deeply about children and their families.

#### **About Ryan Network**

The William F. Ryan Community Health Network's mission is to provide the medically uninsured and underserved in New York City with quality comprehensive health care. Started in 1967 as a federally-funded, single-site demonstration project in Northern Manhattan, we now operate 16 sites, including the Ryan-NENA Community Health Center on the Lower East Side, and the Ryan/Chelsea-Clinton Community Health Center in midtown. The Network serves over 50,000 patients with 250,000 annual visits throughout New York City. Our first Center was re-named the William F. Ryan Community Health Center in 1977 to honor the late Congressman Bill Ryan. This beloved Congressman, who first stated that "health care is a right, not a privilege," was instrumental in Ryan's development, and in the national Community Health Center movement as a whole. We are proud to carry on his tradition of advocacy on behalf of medically underserved patients in New York City.



**On Monday, August, 10, 2009, NYS Assemblyman Jose Rivera read to children**

at Morris Heights Health Center in the Bronx

High resolution JPEG images available. Contact Asari Beale at ROR GNY by email: [abeale@reachoutandreadnyc.org](mailto:abeale@reachoutandreadnyc.org) or phone: (212) 803-3334.

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On Tuesday, August 11, 2009, New York City Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott presented proclamation to Traci Lester, Executive Director of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and Dr. Edward E. Conway, Jr., Chairman of the Milton and Bernice Stern Department of Pediatrics at Beth Israel Medical Center (photograph courtesy of Gerald Peart)



**On Tuesday, August 11, 2009, Councilmember Rosie Mendez (center) read to a captive audience of families and children at Beth Israel Pediatric Associates.  
(photograph courtesy of Gerald Peart)**

**High resolution JPEG images available. Contact Asari Beale at ROR GNY by email: [abeale@reachoutandreadnyc.org](mailto:abeale@reachoutandreadnyc.org) or phone: (212) 803-3334.**

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Children enjoy a fun-filled reading session with Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried (left), Senator Tom Duane (center) and Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal (right) (photograph courtesy of Gerald Peart)

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