



# Got a Baby? Get a Book!

at Northern California Kaiser Permanente Pediatric Clinics

by Wyntriss Smith,  
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When the Solano County Library staff designed a poster, Got a Baby? Get a Book!, to encourage parents to ask their doctors for a book at each well-baby and well-child visit, they were unaware that the phrase would serve as the mantra for Northern California Kaiser Permanente sites. As an ongoing part of pediatric care, parents will receive a new children's book at each well-child visit at all 46 Northern California Kaiser Permanente Pediatric Clinics by the end of the year. The program provides every child, six months through five years of age a new, age appropriate book at each checkup.

The health organization is the largest to adopt a modified version of the national early literacy program *Reach Out and Read (ROR)*. Kaiser Permanente in Southern California began offering a streamlined ROR model providing seven of ten books for patients in 2002. Local ROR supporters appealed to Northern California Kaiser Permanente Regional Administration and Pediatric Chiefs to adopt the program as a standard intervention on the basis that reading to young children improves their physical and emotional development. *Reach Out and Read* studies show that reading aloud to young children stimulates brain development, increases bonding between the parent and child, builds language and literacy skills, and results in school readiness.

Currently, medical sites have children's books burgeoning onto their clinic shelves. In a report by UCLA and ROR, *Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook*, 45% of parents surveyed in California reported reading to children (ages 0-5) daily. With the action taken by Kaiser Permanente, tens of thousands more parents are going to be reading to young children.

Solano County Kaiser Permanente Pediatrics in Vacaville (2000) and Fairfield (2005) embraced the *Reach Out and Read* program in partnership with Solano County Library. As of 2007, pediatricians at these two sites gave 32,000 books to parents of young children with the majority of the funding coming from the Solano County Library Foundation. Kaiser Permanente Pediatrics in Vallejo collaborated with the library at the start of its program in

2003 and with the library's Foundation.

Teresa Perry, RN, the onsite coordinator for Kaiser Fairfield recalled the days before Kaiser Fairfield had the ROR program. "I remember phoning the library (Literacy Services) for books for parents to read while waiting to be called in for their appointments. Now we have books (for well child visits)! One little girl asked me if she could have a book when I checked her newborn brother."

Teresa has children's books to send home with patients, and there are volunteers to read aloud to families in the bustling pediatric waiting area. At Kaiser Permanente Pediatrics Fairfield and Vacaville, the library continues to offer volunteer opportunities for reading aloud as well as information about other library programs.

