

Activating Reading Communities Organization

2024 Fiscal Year



Annual Report

Activating Reading Communities Organization

Activating Reading Communities Organization (ARCO) is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing book access and fostering a vibrant reading culture within our community. Contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. EIN:93-4104956.

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Mission

Activate Dallas' reading culture.

ARCO is committed to championing a robust reading culture by addressing barriers to book access, book ownership and by providing reading experiences that uplift Dallas' reading culture.

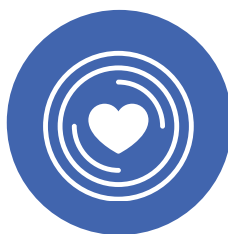
Vision

Our vision is to cultivate a vibrant, inclusive reading culture in Dallas where every individual has access to books and opportunities for literary engagement.

Our Objectives



Create and sustain book access and ownership by removing barriers to quality books and reading resources.



Create positive reading experiences that engage and inspire the community.



Activate third spaces where community members can engage with books, authors, and connect with others in an exchange of ideas.



Letter from the Executive Director

Reflecting on ARCO's first year fills me with immense pride and gratitude. Our journey began with a vision—to cultivate a vibrant, inclusive reading culture in Dallas where every individual has access to books and opportunities for literary engagement.

At its core, reading culture refers to how reading is valued, celebrated, and encouraged within a community. While this may seem straightforward, many factors influence its strength and sustainability.

A strong reading culture starts with access to books, but it entails much more. It requires creating inclusive spaces where reading is a shared experience, celebrated across generations, and integrated into everyday life. It's shaped by community-driven efforts, like book clubs, public libraries, local bookstores, and schools that engage families positively with literature.

When a community embraces reading as a core part of its identity, it fosters curiosity, empathy, and critical thinking. However, in areas where access to books is limited and reading isn't prioritized, gaps in literacy can widen, impacting educational outcomes, economic opportunities, and overall community well-being.

In Dallas, where more than 50% of 4th graders read below the national average, an estimated 20% of adults are illiterate, and 33% are categorized at the lowest literacy level (Level 1)—struggling with basic tasks like filling out forms—the challenge is stark.

Census data shows that most Dallas residents live in "book deserts," areas with limited and inconsistent access to books and book ownership—except for the wealthiest neighborhoods.

This year, we've made incredible strides, gifting over 2,000 books in the community and curating and hosting over 100 community facing literary events that have brought people together, created dialogue, and activated reading culture.

As we move forward, our commitment is stronger than ever. We're excited to grow, reach more communities, and deepen our impact. Thank you for being a vital part of ARCO's story. Together, we are activating reading communities.

"At its core, reading culture refers to how reading is valued, celebrated, and encouraged within a community."

While this may seem straightforward, many factors influence its strength and sustainability."

—Claudia Vega

Sincerely,
Claudia Vega

ARCO's Impact

Thanks to your support, ARCO not only met but exceeded all of its goals this year, activating communities of readers throughout the city to help cultivate Dallas' reading culture. From expanding programs to reaching new communities, every milestone was achieved because of YOU. Your commitment has fueled our success and allowed us to make a significant impact in our innagural year. We are deeply grateful for your partnership in this journey. Thank you for making it all possible!

2.5K+

Participants

attended our events



100+

Literary Events

hosted for community members of all ages



2k+

Books Distributed

contributing over 2,000 books to home libraries



“

Events like these offer a time for the community to come together and celebrate literacy while also creating meaningful conversations... offering not only a space to gather, but a space to feel seen and heard.

—ARCO attendee, Jan. 2024

”

Positive Reading Experiences

The Positive Reading Experiences program, which underlines all of our programming, has transformed the way our community engages with literature. By providing dynamic, inclusive, and uplifting reading events, we have cultivated a love for books while making reading a joyful and shared experience for participants of all ages.

Our program hosted over 100 community facing literary events, including story times, book clubs, author talks and meet-and-greets that attracted over 2,500 participants throughout the year. These events brought literature to life, creating spaces where community members could not only read but also engage in meaningful discussions, share personal stories, and form connections around literature.

One of the most impactful aspects of this program has been its emphasis on cultural representation and diversity. We prioritized featuring authors and stories that reflect the diverse backgrounds of our community, allowing readers to see themselves in the narratives while also inviting them to explore other cultures and perspectives.. This focus on representation has resonated deeply with participants, many of whom expressed feeling more connected to literature than ever before.

Our approach went beyond traditional reading sessions by incorporating interactive elements like arts and crafts, performance, and music into our events. These multi-sensory experiences helped to deepen engagement, especially among younger readers, who not only listened to stories but also explored them through creative expression.

Parents often express that these experiences have help to transform their relationship with reading. “I get excited to take my little one on Saturday mornings. the atmosphere, feels like families reading together for a purpose. I never did anything like this as a child myself, so I’m happy to start this tradition with my child and grow his own collection of books.” shared a Community Story Time parent participant.

A highlight of the program was our series of bilingual reading events, which encouraged families to embrace reading in both English and Spanish. These events helped foster a sense of belonging and pride for our Spanish-speaking communities, promoting bilingual literacy and a love for reading across generations.



Average implementation cost per participant:

Book Clubs \$35 - Community & Conversation \$45 - Author Events \$55

Book Access Program



In our inaugural year, the Book Access Program has made significant strides in bringing books and reading resources to historically underserved and marginalized communities and identified book deserts.

Throughout the year, we facilitated the distribution of over 2,000 books to households that previously had limited access to reading materials.

By partnering with local schools, like-minded nonprofits, neighborhood families, and community groups, we've helped transform new readers into book owners, contributing to the growth of home libraries in our communities. We also support those who have already connected with reading in a meaningful way by making books more accessible and removing cost-prohibitive barriers when needed, helping them maintain and expand their home libraries, fostering a lasting culture of reading and learning.

Our Book Access program has reached over an estimated 2,000 families and individuals, through ARCO sponsored book fairs, community book gifting events, and browsing experiences, creating access and inspiration to continue to connect with books.

As shared by a 17-year-old participant of the Book Access Program, who recently attended a book browsing experience and author talk: "This was something new for me, and It's a new experience that I really enjoyed and something that I would look forward to coming back to again."

We also focused on amplifying the diversity of the books provided, ensuring that stories reflected the lives and experiences of the communities we serve. This year, we distributed books in both English and Spanish, promoting bilingual literacy and ensuring cultural relevance.

Our program didn't just put books in hands; it created opportunities for children and adults to exercise agency and choice in order to self-select books through meaningful literary programming and Book Access browsing experiences.

The first year of the Book Access Program has laid a strong foundation, and we are eager to build on this success in the years to come. As we look forward to the coming years, we are committed to expanding this initiative, with the goal of gifting 5,000 books into the community annually.

Average implementation cost per participant: Reading Culture & Browsing Experience \$100
Community Story Time Book Gifting Experience \$30 – Gifted Book Fair Experience \$125

Third Spaces

ARCO's Third Spaces Program has successfully created welcoming environments for community members to come together and engage with literature in innovative ways. By transforming local spaces—such as parks, community centers, and cafes—into vibrant reading hubs, we fostered connections between readers of all ages and backgrounds.

Over the past year, we hosted monthly events that attracted over 500 participants. These gatherings featured a variety of activities, including book discussions, poetry readings, and interactive storytelling sessions, all designed to spark dialogue and build community.

The program's unique focus on accessibility allowed us to reach individuals who may not have felt comfortable in traditional library settings. Participants expressed feeling more at ease in these informal spaces, leading to increased engagement with reading and literacy resources.

Our strategic partnerships with community serving organizations and collaborative partnerships with community leaders have enabled us to host a variety of events such as The Oak Cliff Summer Book Fair, Community & Conversation forums and

Feedback from attendees highlighted the program's positive impact: “The Third Spaces events have made reading feel like a shared journey, not just a solitary activity. I love meeting new people and discovering new stories together.”

As we look ahead, we aim to expand our Third Spaces initiatives, bringing even more diverse literary experiences to our community and continuing to partner with more community oriented organizations to expand our reach and impact.

Average implementation cost per participant:

Book Clubs \$35 - Community & Conversation \$45 - Author Events \$55

ARCO Community Partners

- Apprentice Oak Cliff
- Bathhouse Book Club
- Be Project
- Better Block
- Bishop Arts Theatre Center
- Bishop Dunne Catholic School
- Bishop Arts STEAM Academy
- Cannenta Foundation
- City of Dallas Office of Arts & Culture
- Child Care Group
- Coco André & Olmo
- Communities Foundation of Texas
- Cute Little Ruin Vintage
- Dallas College
- Dallas Is Lit! Literary Festival
- Dallas Girls Book Club
- Dallas Silent Book Club
- DMA arts&letterslive
- Garcia Mental Health
- Hay Festival Forum Dallas
- Human Rights Campaign
- Journey Forward Mentoring
- Junior League of Dallas
- Oak Cliff Cultural Center
- Out In Tech Dallas
- Out Loud
- Pegasus Reuse
- Sunset High School P-Tech
- SapphiQ
- #Teen Writing
- The Dallas Theatre Center
- The Momentous School
- The Writer's Garrett
- Uplift Schools
- UT Southwestern, Harold C. Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Work/Shop Mobile Art Studio



ARCO's Board

We are proud to introduce our inaugural Board of Trustees, a remarkable group of leaders whose expertise and passion will help us to drive our mission forward.

These dedicated trustees bring invaluable support, strategic direction, and oversight, ensuring ARCO's growth and success as we work to expand our impact in activating Dallas' reading culture.

Our trustees come from diverse fields—including community development, education, public health, and organizational leadership—bringing a wealth of perspectives that enrich every facet of our work. Their insights will help ensure that ARCO continues its commitment to developing innovative, proactive, and impactful programs that address the unique needs of our historically underserved communities and book desserts in Dallas.

We are immensely grateful for their unwavering commitment to ARCO's vision. It is a privilege to have their support as we work to connect communities with literature, increase book access, and inspire a shared culture of reading.

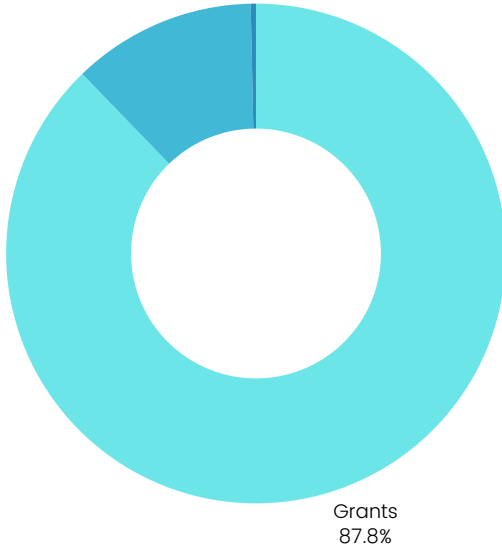


Board Members

- Claudia Vega
- John Vega
- Eva Creel
- Dr. Amanda Dudley
- Dr. Macario Hernández
- Haewon Park
- Liz Ternes
- Marenid Planell Camacho

Financials

Individual Donations
11.9%



Revenue

- Grants \$115,500.00
- Individual Donations \$15,665.00
- Donation Based Event Revenue \$443.88

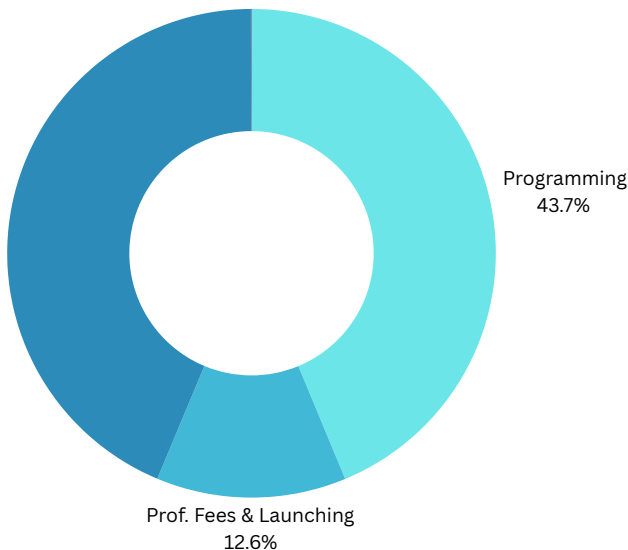
Total: \$131,608.88

Expenses

- Personnel \$53,750.04
- Prof. Fees \$15,464.64
- Programming \$53,851.90

Total: \$123,066.58

Personnel
43.7%



Programming
43.7%

Prof. Fees & Launching
12.6%

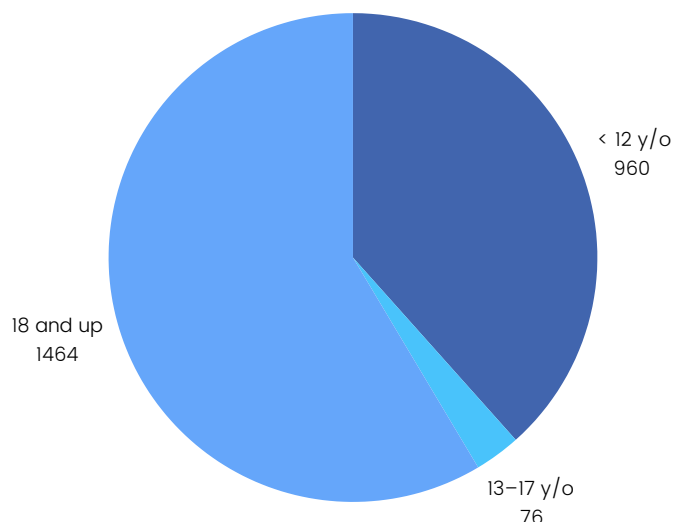
Recognition & Thanks

ARCO extends our heartfelt gratitude to The Writer's Garret for their invaluable support as our fiscal sponsor during our journey to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Their guidance and partnership have been instrumental in helping us build a strong foundation for ARCO's vision. We are deeply appreciative of their commitment to uplifting the literary arts, and we look forward to many more shared efforts to foster literacy and inclusivity across Dallas. Thank you, The Writer's Garret, for standing with us!

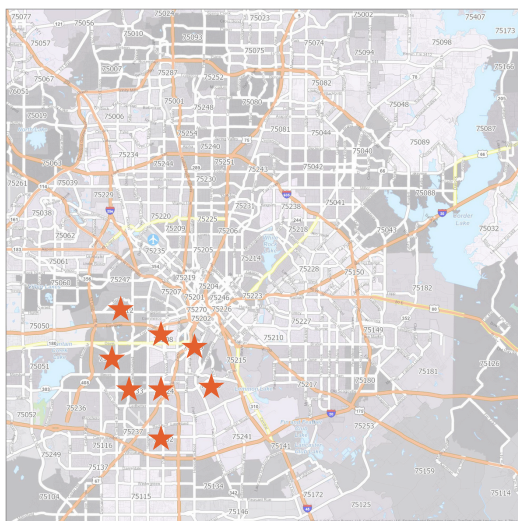
Demographics

Ages

In our inaugural year, ARCO proudly brought readers of all ages together, from young children to seniors, fostering intergenerational connections through the joy of reading.

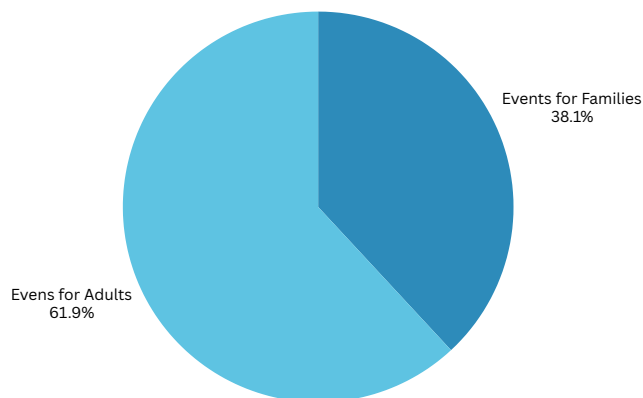


75208
75211
75216
75212
75224
75203
75233
75232



Zip Codes

ARCO proudly reached neighborhoods across multiple zip codes, extending our impact throughout the community.



Events Hosted

- Events for families 40
- Events for adults 65

Total: 105

Thank you!

Our work is only possible because of YOUR generosity. We want to thank all the incredible members of our community who went above and beyond to support our mission.

Legacy Builder

- Anonymous Fund

Beacons of Reading Culture

- Mr. & Mrs. Christiansen

Reading Culture Champions

- Anonymous Fund
- Communities Foundation of Texas

Friends of ARCO

- Aaron Glover
- Allison Chew
- Allison Tibbits
- Anonymous
- Anonymous
- Amy Schaffner
- An Wong
- Andres Aguilar
- Anjulie Ponce
- April Ortiz
- Betty Rodriguez
- Brittny Martinez
- Caprice Chotoosingh
- Cassie MacGregor
- Catherine Whiteman
- Cesar Reyna
- Christopher Manalansan
- Claudia Maysen
- Derek Behrens
- Denise Jasso
- Denisse Escobedo

- Edona Etemi
- Emilee Dube
- Faith Seamans
- Lauren Meeks
- LeeAnn Mallory
- Lina De Leon
- Liz Ternes
- Jennifer Gonzales Velazquez
- Jennifer McNabb
- Johnny Taboada
- John Rose
- Jonathan Resendez
- Jonathan Todd
- Justin Guillory
- Kaitlin Snow
- Kendal Hill
- Kimmy Mullins
- Kristan Taylor
- Larry Nelson-Guillen
- M Grace Kenney
- Maria Gant
- Martha Velez

- Matthew McCloat
- Matthew Pillado
- Melissa Henry
- Nenna Nwazota
- Nonaxy De Los Santos
- Out in Tech
- Peyton Collum
- Rachael Vigil
- Rachel Chewakin
- Ranjani Ahrens
- Rebecca Balcarcel
- Rebecca Ruiz
- Rita Castillo
- Sarita Prabhu
- Sean Woodard
- Sharon Velez
- Silvia Grossi
- Teresa Miranda-Martinez
- Vanessa Zertuche
- Xochitl Gonzalez



Thank you!

Our work is only possible because of YOUR dedication. We want to thank all the amazing volunteers who go above and beyond to support our mission and make a real difference in our community

ARCO Led Book Club Hosts

- Leslie Chatman
- Dr. Joy Woods Bennett
- Dr. Lance Bennett
- Jay D. Guillory
- Rita Castillo- Vela
- Matthew Pillado
- Liz Ternes

ASL Community Story Time Readers

- Daniel Reyes & Ana Michel

ARCO Sponsored Book Clubs



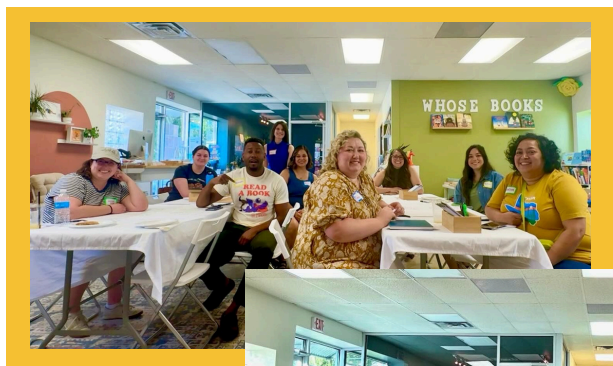
Bath House Book Club



Dallas Girls Book Club

Volunteers

- Teresa Miranda-Martinez
- Martha Rodriguez
- Madeleine Tuck
- Giovanna Chevez
- Sarah Simmons
- Laura Thompson
- Monica Hernandez
- Leila Lester
- Sandra Gonzalez
- Natalie Stigall
- Monica Hernandez
- Ximena Luna
- Carla Garibo





Get Involved!

This work is only possible with the help and support of individuals like YOU! To learn more about how you can help contribute to our mission and vision, please reach out to us, we'd love to talk to you more!

To collaborate

Claudia Vega
Executive Director
claudia@readwitharco.org

To volunteer

Marenid Planell Camacho
Director of Development
marenid@readwitharco.org

To donate



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