

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



## Letter from our Board Chair and CEO

This year flew by almost as fast as the over 22,000 video-recorded United Through Reading stories traveling over land and sea to reach military children across America. Our more than 500 volunteers eagerly facilitated United Through Reading for U.S. service members at more than 260 recording locations around the globe. In all, nearly 100,000 military family members stayed connected with each other during challenging times through stories read with love by faraway military parents.

Many service members told us that their United Through Reading videos have simply worn out as their children played them again and again during long separations. We ask this question in our participant survey: How often did your child watch the recording during this deployment?

The answers thrilled us. Eighty percent of recorded stories are enjoyed by children nearly every day until mom or dad returns home. That's a mega-dose of reading together to build listening skills, vocabulary, curiosity, and passion for reading. And it's one reason that United Through Reading received the 2015 American Prize from the Library of Congress Literacy Program for outstanding contribution to children's literacy and parents' involvement in literacy.

Top: One of the 22,000 United Through Reading bedtime stories made in 2015.



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2015 HIGHLIGHTS

The year culminated with United Through Reading being awarded the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program 2015 American Prize, but there were many other highpoints:

- United Through Reading welcomed four new board members who have added to our remarkable team of passionate and talented leaders who pour their hearts into our organization for the benefit of military families.
- In an initiative to engage service members with unique missions that make communication during deployment difficult, our staff set up a “pop up” recording studio for Naval Special Warfare (NSW) before their imminent departure. They read *Punk Farm* by Jarrett J. Krosoczka and sang one-of-a-kind renditions of “Old McDonald Had a Farm.” We were pleased to provide the opportunity for these special operators to leave recorded stories with children they love.
- Our strategy to offer internet-based recording options reached a new milestone. From January to July 2015 as part of Booz Allen Hamilton’s Leadership Excellence Program and Compass’ Community Leadership Project, we worked with a team of eight senior associates from Booz Allen Hamilton. The result of this six-month project, valued at \$112,000, was a complete set of design requirements for a mobile application which would improve United Through Reading’s reach and scalability. Development of this application will enable us to reach more service members in more locations around the globe with greater efficiency and effectiveness.
- Events are becoming vital to funding our mission. In May, we hosted our second annual Tribute to Military Families in Washington, D.C., with BAE Systems, Inc. as our Title Sponsor and celebrated our work with 300 supporters. During the evening we heard from families from each branch of service, honored the men and women of the GEORGE H. W. BUSH Carrier Strike Group, and recognized Birdies for the Brave for their support of military families and of United Through Reading with contributions of \$630,000 since 2010.
- The seventh Annual Storybook Ball held in November in Coronado, California was a smashing success! The event raised nearly \$200,000 to unite military families. We welcomed 230 guests and heard inspiring stories from keynote speaker Sergeant Major Bryan Battaglia, USMC, Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and from Rear Admiral Joe Campbell, USN (Ret), Vice President and General Manager of Ship Repair, a division of BAE Systems, the Title Sponsor of the event.

As we look back on the success of 2015, we’re filled with respect and gratitude for our generous donors, hard-working volunteers, and amazing partners. YOU make it possible for countless bedtime stories to travel the globe. Thank you, thank you, thank you.



**Jeff Mader**  
Board of Trustees  
Board Chair



**Sally Ann Zoll, Ed.D.**  
Chief Executive Officer

# STORIES FROM PARTICIPANTS

I am married to my wonderful wife Angelina and together we have a beautiful daughter named Izel. An active duty Sailor, I'm currently assigned to the mighty USS Makin Island (LHD 8). My first experience with United Through Reading (UTR) was on my 2015 western pacific deployment aboard USS Makin Island, recording a video for my daughter in preparation of the upcoming holidays; I made approximately five videos during the deployment. UTR is a wonderful tool to communicate and stay in contact with loved ones to create lasting memories. I believe it's never too early to introduce children to the wonderful world of literature and UTR filled in the separation gap created by deployments and helped me stay relevant in my child's mind during the absence. FaceTime and Skype are a luxury that we Sailors do not have due to bandwidth limitations and OPSEC restrictions.

*“Izel had the biggest smile when she saw me on the TV and she continues to wear that smile every time she reads a book.”*

Our family reads and utilizes sign language books on a daily basis due to my daughter being hard of hearing. UTR has definitely positively impacted my daughter; her desire to read is evident by the simple effort of her grabbing books off the shelf and bringing them to me to read to her. In my UTR recordings I used the books provided by the program. Now that she is a bit older and her likes and dislikes have become more solid, I plan to take some of her favorite butterfly and sign language books with me for our next deployment.

Any separation from loved ones is hard; deployments are especially hard for the service member due to communication limitations and mission assignment. During my deployment in 2015 I made a UTR video in preparation for the Christmas holiday. My entire family visited my wife and daughter while I was away, and they received my video just in time for the 25th. They sent me an email to express their gratitude; one that was very difficult for me to read while holding back tears. After receiving her UTR recording, Izel had the biggest smile when she saw me on the TV and she continues to wear that smile every time she reads a book.

**AO1 Karim Hernandez**  
G-3 LPO, USS Makin Island (LHD-8)  
United Through Reading Participant



UTR reading room on the USS Makin Island (LHD-8)



The USS Makin Island (LHD-8)



Sophia and Isabella, UTR kids, enjoying their bedtime stories.

Reading has always been an important nightly ritual with our girls. From the moment our oldest daughter Mayling was born we began reading together as a family. It helped us bond with each other and our children as we read and discussed the many themes of the books we read. Reading brought us together. When the Navy deployed Ian again after our oldest daughter was born, we were resolute in making sure that our family bonds and our tradition of reading stayed strong. We knew that a key aspect was to maintain a sense of Daddy's presence in our everyday lives. Around that time Ian was introduced to United Through Reading (UTR) and so began our journey.

Our daughter Mayling was under 2 years old when we started using UTR and she would sit and marvel at her Dad on the screen. She would hilariously look behind the screen for him when the story was over. For me, it was endearing to see her enthralled by her Dad reading and it made us feel that we were a bit closer together. It was nice to hear his voice reading while I cooked dinner and it gave us a glimpse of the passing of time, reminding us that he would be home soon.

Our middle daughter Allegra has Phelan McDermid Syndrome, a very rare genetic condition. She was diagnosed when she was 2 years old, while Ian was on shore duty. When he went back to sea duty, we worried how

the separation would impact their relationship. Children with her condition can easily forget parents even after just a few days of absence. She was nonverbal which made it harder for us to know exactly how she felt. We made a point of playing the UTR recordings as often as possible, keeping his voice and face fresh in her mind.

*“We made a point of playing the UTR recordings as often as possible, keeping his voice and face fresh in her mind.”*

When I picked up Ian and brought him home, we waited tentatively for her reaction. She stood at the top of the stairs watching him, then she simply bounded into his arms — pure joy on her face. She would not let him out of her sight for days. We feel strongly that the UTR videos helped both her and her sisters maintain their close ties to their Dad. We still play the videos often, especially when Ian is gone. We will continue to use UTR to bring our family closer until we move on from Navy life. When we play our recordings, for a short little while, it's like Daddy is home with us.

**Mayling Garrison**

United Through Reading U.S. Navy Mom



# STORIES FROM VOLUNTEERS

**W**atching the toughest guys you know showing their soft side when reading to their children was great. Seeing the light on everyone's face and knowing how much they miss home made my work as a UTR volunteer a great experience.

**A UTR Active Duty Coordinator**

**S**taff Sergeant Thomas Duval served as an enthusiastic active duty coordinator for United Through Reading while deployed to Sinai Peninsula, Egypt in 2015.

“UTR is beneficial to everyone; the program allows Soldiers to feel like they are there with their children even if only for a few minutes. I never had anyone tell me their kids didn't enjoy the video. In the Sinai Peninsula, we had Soldiers come back again and again because of how much their kids valued that few minutes of reading. It has truly been a great experience, and the feedback we have received has been phenomenal.”

**Staff Sergeant Thomas Duval, U.S. Army**

UTR Active Duty Coordinator  
Sinai Peninsula Egypt, United States Army

Sgt. Stephen Seefeld, Task Force Sinai, reads to his children with UTR in the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt.





TSgt. Kersh and a group of readers at Joint Base Andrews. Right: TSgt. Kersh reading to a group of young readers at Joint Base Andrews.

I am an Active Duty Air Force Technical Sergeant and Readiness NCOIC at the Military & Family Support Center on Joint Base Andrews, Home of Air Force One. I have been deployed several times around the world and supported OIF and OEF. United Through Reading has not only helped me as a single mother but also many of our deployed members who have trouble staying connected. UTR is convenient, allows service members to remain on schedule, and offers them an opportunity to leave a unique gift behind. I first found out about UTR when I was a single parent in 2002 and have continued to use it through my last deployment in 2014. Because of UTR, I was able to communicate leaving for a deployment to my 3-year-old son who didn't understand. When I returned, he told me that I was just reading to him and he wanted to know how I got home from work so quickly!

*“Deployed service members are not only establishing a smoother reintegration by maintaining a visual and audio connection, they are also aiding in their loved ones reading capabilities.”*

One of the many benefits of the UTR program is academics. Many of the books we have in stock at Joint Base Andrews are a part of a campaign to STEM the Summer Slide with science, technology, engineering and math themed books. Deployed service members are not only establishing a smoother reintegration by maintaining a visual and audio connection, they are also aiding in their loved ones reading capabilities.

Not only do we use the UTR program here at the Military & Family Support Center but we also reach out to all our Child Development Centers (CDC) on base. We relaunched our UTR program with the Read for the Record Campaign. Linking the UTR program with the CDCs helps families include the program in their daily routine so when members leave, their children are already familiar.

The program gives service members a platform to discuss difficult conversations about separation, using books to explain what is happening within the family. It brings the information down to a child's level often needed to explain that the military member will be gone for an extended period of time. UTR truly creates and supports a bond that will last forever.

**Technical Sergeant Janell R Kersh, USAF**  
UTR Active Duty Coordinator  
Joint Base Andrews, United States Air Force



# FINANCIAL REPORT

For 27 years United Through Reading has been committed to **accountability, efficiency, and transparency**, with a **dedication** to good stewardship of the funds entrusted to us by our extremely generous donors. The organization manages funds with great care, prudent annual budgeting, and analysis of current trends and projections in today's world.

Our organization is audited by an external auditor on an annual basis and has consistently received unqualified reporting noting that financials fairly state the affairs in all material aspects. Our board-appointed Finance Committee meets twice yearly at a minimum and is made up of national financial experts. This committee ensures the organization has a sound and prudent financial management system that results in the efficient and effective management of resources.

In 2015, we provided opportunities for individuals, companies, and organizations to participate in the life-changing work of our mission. These opportunities included the options for gifts to be given with an array of tax-wise and beneficial charitable gift options as well as national employee giving initiatives to leverage the impact of individual donations through employer gift match programs. These gifts positively impacted thousands of children and adult beneficiaries.

As UTR continues to grow, we will remain fiscally responsible and accountable to our donors, supporters, and the thousands of military families we serve.



A service member recording a bedtime story from the UTR recording location at USO Bagram.



## Statement of Activities Year ended December 31, 2015

<b>SUPPORT &amp; OTHER REVENUE</b>	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
Corporations	\$552,461	–	–	\$552,461
Foundations & Civic Organizations	\$176,017	\$29,195	–	\$205,212
In-kind contributions	\$182,419	–	–	\$182,419
Individuals	\$104,236	–	–	\$104,236
NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTIONS	\$30,816	(\$30,816)	–	–
<b>TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	\$1,045,949	(\$1,621)	–	\$1,044,328
Special events	\$471,268	–	–	\$471,268
Investment income	\$925	(\$687)	(\$341)	(\$103)
<b>TOTAL OTHER REVENUE</b>	\$472,193	(\$687)	(\$341)	\$471,165
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND OTHER REVENUE</b>	<b>\$1,518,142</b>	<b>(\$2,308)</b>	<b>(\$341)</b>	<b>\$1,515,493</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
Program services	\$1,176,883	–	–	\$1,176,883
Management and general	\$172,701	–	–	\$172,701
Fundraising	\$155,017	–	–	\$155,017
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM AND SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>	\$1,504,601	–	–	\$1,504,601
Special events	\$283,765	–	–	\$283,765
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$1,788,366</b>			<b>\$1,788,366</b>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(\$270,224)	(\$2,308)	(\$341)	(\$272,873)
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$709,604	\$71,018	\$45,652	\$826,274
<b>NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$439,380</b>	<b>\$68,710</b>	<b>\$45,311</b>	<b>\$553,401</b>

## Statement of Financial Position Year ended December 31, 2015

<b>ASSETS</b>	TOTAL	<b>LIABILITIES</b>	TOTAL
Cash and cash equivalents	\$559,537	Accounts payable & accrued expenses	\$79,298
Contribution receivable	\$14,570	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	\$79,298
Prepaid expenses	\$6,231	<b>NET ASSETS</b>	TOTAL
Furniture and equipment, net	\$406	Unrestricted	\$439,380
Beneficial interests in endowment funds	\$51,955	Temporarily restricted	\$68,710
		Permanently restricted	\$45,311
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$632,699</b>	<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$553,401</b>
		<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$632,699</b>

# STORIES FROM DONORS

**M**y daughter is 2 years old and gets a bedtime story every night. I love that you promote reading to children even from afar. It's such a great bonding experience that parents should not miss out on simply because they are overseas.

**Jennifer Taylor**

BAE Systems, Inc. Employee  
UTR Donor

**B**ooz Allen Hamilton is proud of our long-standing relationship with United Through Reading (UTR) and its important mission, and we jumped at the chance to invest in UTR's long term success. To that end, a team of our high potential leaders joined in a pro bono effort to assess the implications of emerging technologies on the UTR program support model. It was exciting to watch the team's growing passion for the UTR mission as they witnessed the positive effects on family continuity. That passion fueled their analysis and final recommendations, some of which are being acted upon now as UTR works to evolve its mission support model.

**Tony Mitchell**

Executive VP, Booz Allen Hamilton  
UTR Board of Trustees

**A**s the holiday season approached, we received a call from Kristin Callahan who lives outside Fort Bragg in North Carolina. She and her husband, a dentist in the Army, have a 2-year-old son named Liam. Though they themselves haven't deployed, they've known many families who have.

The Callahans wanted to use Liam's first birthday to teach him to be generous and learn to give to others. They didn't see a need for an abundance of toys so they searched for an organization that served military families and children. They chose to support UTR because they believe in the importance of reading to children and encouraging literacy at an early age. In the Callahan family they get really excited about reading to Liam; they know what a difference it will make in his language development and literacy skills as he grows up. They enthusiastically shared the mission of UTR with family and friends and celebrated Liam's first year by giving back to the military families that serve us all.

UTR is so grateful for families like the Callahans who chose to give back to our nation's military and strongly believe in the power of reading aloud. It's donors like them that make it possible for UTR to impact military families with millions of bedtimes stories each year.

**Callahan Family**

UTR Donor



Liam Callahan,  
one of our youngest  
UTR donors.



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Mrs. Kristina McMorris  
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Monterey Bay Officers'  
Spouses Club  
Mr. Scott Kuyper and  
Mrs. Anne Murphy-Kuyper  
Mr. and Mrs. Kyle Nyswonger  
Officers' Spouses' Club  
Marine Corp Ground Combat  
at Twentynine Palms  
Optimist Club of Coronado, Inc.  
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Ms. Ilano Serrao  
Mr. James Lewis and  
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Ms. Jeanie Spies  
CAPT Chandler Swallow  
and CDR Tina Swallow  
Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Tessnear  
CAPT Craig Turley and  
CAPT Lori F. Turley  
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Mr. Warren Schaefer and  
Mrs. Pamela K. Willis  
Wonderful Giving  
Mr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Woodbridge

## **Thank you to our generous donors.**

# 2015 BY THE NUMBERS

In 2015, with the help of more than 500 volunteers, United Through Reading served nearly 100,000 beneficiaries at more than 260 recording locations around the world, distributing more than 10,000 children's books to military children.

**Military families stayed connected using United Through Reading from:**

19

U.S. AIR FORCE AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDS

14

U.S. ARMY AND ARMY NATIONAL GUARD COMMANDS

26

U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTERS AND COMMANDS

17

JOINT COMMANDS TO INCLUDE BAHRAIN, HORN OF AFRICA, GUANTANAMO BAY

44

U.S. MARINE CORPS COMMANDS AND LIBRARIES

4

MEDICAL COMMANDS TO INCLUDE USNS COMFORT, FORT BELVOIR WARRIOR TRANSITION BATTALION

68

U.S. NAVY COMMANDS INCLUDING NAVY SPECIAL WARFARE

70

USO HOST-SITES



In 2015, military families stayed connected from more than 260 United Through Reading locations worldwide.

## ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY

At United Through Reading we see Technology as a tool which enables us to serve more military families, more efficiently and with greater geographical reach. Through in-kind support from Google and SalesForce, technology continues to support every facet of our mission.

### PROGRAM DELIVERY

In 2015, we used our cloud-based platform to serve Sailors deployed to Afghanistan as well as Marines on the ground in Al Taqaddum Airbase (TQ) which is in the central part of Iraq. To add a bit of color to the success in TQ, here's the story:

In early December, the Chaplains from the TQ unit requested a camera kit from UTR that was funded by a Marine Corps spouse club donation. Due to the lengthy time for mail delivery to Southwest Asia, the kit wasn't received until the 23rd of December. No issue though. The Marines were video-recorded reading their favorite storybooks to their children on Christmas Eve and, with the greatest of ease, the Chaplains uploaded the files to the Marine's individual, private UTR account so that storytime could be delivered to their families instantaneously. This made for a very happy holiday for the deployed parents who were able to be "home" to read a story to their eager children even though



they were thousands of miles away. Although limited bandwidth prevents many units from using the cloud-based solution, the units that do have adequate internet access are able to provide reliable, repeatable, and accessible video-recordings to their children without having to rely on mail pouches or postal service.

In areas where cloud-based delivery is not an option, UTR continues to look at innovative ways to ensure the highest quality product is delivered to families at home. The most common method is for the active duty volunteer to use a video camera with an SD card, record the video, and transfer the video to a laptop with DVD-burning software. Having a tangible video along with the book continues to be a huge comfort to our military children.

#### DEVELOPMENT

Our Development team has achieved greater efficiency through the expansion of virtual services. In 2015, the

development team moved from a locally maintained database and joined our program delivery team on a Salesforce platform. Moving to Salesforce has provided increased access and efficiency in tracking donations and has enabled greater engagement with donors and supporters while greatly reducing maintenance and support costs.

#### MOBILE APP

Our strategy to offer internet-based recording options grew leaps and bounds in 2015. United Through Reading staff worked with a team of eight senior associates from Booz Allen Hamilton as part of their Leadership Excellence Program and Compass' Community Leadership Project to complete design requirements for a project to develop and define a mobile app. The app could greatly enhance and improve the reach and scalability to provide United Through Reading access to all service members regardless of location.

## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS LITERACY AWARD

In 2015, United Through Reading was selected to receive the American Prize of the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program, awarding us \$50,000 for **our significant and measurable contribution to increasing literacy levels and the national awareness of the importance of literacy.** Through the generosity of David M. Rubenstein, the program honors organizations that have made outstanding contributions in the United States or abroad.

Promoting literacy awareness through the act of reading aloud is at the core of United Through Reading's mission. Eighty percent of United Through Reading participants assert that the program has increased their children's interest in reading and in books. Recognition from the Library of Congress for this effort is an incredible honor. The award will also serve as a catalyst for us to continue raising awareness with the general public about the challenges military children face. For example, a strong association has been found between children who have endured separations from a parent due to deployment and lower achievement in reading and math. The UTR team was truly humbled to have received this recognition from the Library of Congress.



CEO, Sally Ann Zoll, Ed.D., accepting our 2015 American Prize at the Library of Congress Literacy Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C.


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**READING  
TOGETHER  
UNITES  
FAMILIES**