

Why your gifts matter.



Freedom Readers

INSPIRING TODAY'S YOUTH ONE BOOK AT A TIME

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

IMPROVING
READING SKILLS
IS OUR MISSION

Your gifts prepare children to become competent readers and confident leaders.

Thanks to you, **210 scholars at 12 sites** in Georgetown and Horry Counties received one-to-one literacy tutoring, free books for their home libraries, and personalized public speaking training.

Your gifts help scholars in our K-5 program build their home libraries with books they love, and middle school scholars improve their lives through goal setting and academic support.

In-Person Sessions

FALL: 100 Scholars* / 98 Tutors**

SPRING: 81 Scholars* / 76 Tutors**

SUMMER: 22 Scholars* / 41 Tutors**

The Reading Lab

2023: 7 Scholars*

Books, Barber Shops & Beyond

- 17 sites throughout Horry County with plans to move into Georgetown in 2024!
- Over 2,000 books were handed out through this program.

* A total of **2,086 books** were distributed to our scholars to help build their at-home libraries!

** Started recording tutor volunteer hours Fall 2023: **1092 hours**. Total active volunteers in 2023: **148**.

2023 Recap

2023 was a big year here at Freedom Readers. Not only did we celebrate 13 years of operation we also celebrated the expansion of our program! We saw the return of many of our in-person sites after COVID-19 and the first implementation and pilot of our Knights For Knowledge program at the Claire Chapin Epps YMCA. Across Horry & Georgetown counties, we had a total of 12 sites up and running during 2023. During our sessions, our scholars learned about some incredible themes. Starting the year off they learned all about Money: how to manage it, what it means to invest, and how we can give back to our communities. Then scholars dove into the Gullah Geechee Culture and how it influenced many of the things they enjoy today. Lastly, they finished the year learning all about the Ocean! We explored everything from animals and plants to how they can help keep the ocean clean.

During the year, we also welcomed some new faces to the Freedom Readers family: our Volunteer Director, Dr. Whitney Morris, our Program Manager, Melissa Seek, and our New Regional Executive Director, Tamara Greene. We also saw the return of Horry County Outreach Coordinator Marsha Wilmot and Linda Alston stepped into the role of Development Associate! We are so excited to continue this growth and reach new heights in 2024!



Recognizing Graduating Scholars

In 2023, we celebrated 9 scholars who were graduating from our program! These scholars completed elementary school and are now moving into middle school! From the Mu Iota Omega center, we had **Tzion Johnson**; from Bay Pointe Apartments, we had **Daniel de la Cruz**; from Chesterfield Missionary Baptist Church, we had **Lyrik Livingston**; at Southern Georgetown Community Library, we had **Dakota Robinson** and **Ayala Singleton**; at Friendship Place we had **Ian Bondsk**, **Kendall Graves**, and **Kayden Graves**; then lastly from our Reading Lab program, we had **Hajar Battach**. Hajar Battach even gave a speech about her time at Freedom Readers at our 2023 Red Carpet Awards!

Each one of our graduating scholars accomplished so much during their time at Freedom Readers and it was truly an honor to watch them grow. They all brought something incredible to each of their sites and have the potential to do some pretty amazing things. While their time at Freedom Readers came to an end, we know that their journey of growth and learning has only just begun. At Freedom Readers, not only are we proud of their accomplishment, but we also hope that they take everything they have learned during their time with us and use it to go far in this world. As Dr. Suess says in *Oh the Places You'll Go*:

*"You're off to great places
Today is your day
Your mountain is waiting
Go, get on your way!"*

Congratulations to our 2023 graduating scholars!



*"Once you learn to read,
you are forever free."*

- FREDERICK DOUGLASS

We would like to recognize our top donors of the year:

SPECIAL GRANTS



United Way
of Horry County



FREEDOM SPONSORS (\$5,000+)



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Issac Bailey

HONOR SPONSORS (\$1,000+)

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Technologies Foundation

Howard Barnard

Jeff Branzburg & Meryl Schaffer

Cliff Ellis

Hadwin-White Buick

Steve Gallo

Sneak Peak in 2024!

We have some new exciting things underway here at Freedom Readers! We are starting the year strong with our spring session theme of Inventors, learning all about the inventions that shaped our world. Then we will jump into our summer session with our Olympics theme. Our scholars will learn all about the Olympic games before they start in July. We are also revamping our Knights for Knowledge program under a new name, Book Club!

Book Club will still function as a way to assist already-established after school programs in implementing literacy programs. It will use a literacy circles model where small groups read through the same book together. Book Club will focus mainly on comprehension, discussion, and critical thinking. We aim to reach even more scholars and offer them fun and exciting ways to practice their reading skills. It will still include the fundamentals of our traditional program, community, building a love of reading, and of course public speaking. We are excited to pilot the program at a few of our sites in Summer 2024!

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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