

# Little Readers Read-A-Thon: An initiative of the Australasian NIDCAP Training Centre and Life's Little Treasures Foundation

In 2020, staff working in Special Care Nurseries (SCN) and Newborn Intensive Care Nurseries (NICUs) worldwide were invited to participate in the Little Readers Read-A-Thon. Reading to babies every day supports development not only in the NICU, but also going into early infancy and childhood. Babies enjoy hearing their parent's voice over any other sound, and perhaps what's more important is that it is an activity that parents can do every day for their baby during a time when many feel helpless in an intense and often stressful environment. Reading is also linked to improved language and writing abilities at school age, so it's never too early to start. We encourage you to join our Little Readers Read-a-thon.

*The Little Readers Read-a-thon is endorsed by the NIDCAP Federation International.*

**Dates for 2021 are 6-17 September.** Check website for details - <https://lifeslittletreasures.org.au>



## Little Readers Read-A-Thon Winner 2020

Theresa Gisondi BSN, RN, Assistant Nurse Manager, Special Care Nursery

The Andrew Tesaro's Special Care Nursery (SCN) at Abington-Jefferson Health in Pennsylvania, USA was thrilled to participate in the Little Readers Read-A-Thon in September of 2020. Our Clinical Nurse Scientist, Dr. Gretchen Lawhon, brought this event to our attention and we recruited nursing volunteers to plan the event.

Our first step in planning the Read-A-Thon was to involve the community by requesting book donations. We posted our advertisement for book donations throughout the hospital as well as on the Newborn Special Care Associates Facebook page. During the Read-A-Thon, we received approximately 400 books that were used for Read-A-Thon "starter packs" that included five books, education on the importance of reading to infants, a handmade bookmark, and hand sanitizer to stress the importance of hand hygiene. In addition to the Read-A-Thon starter packs, we gave out books throughout the event and used some for prizes at the end. We continue to receive donations which allows us to have a robust library from which we continue to give books to our parents and promote reading to babies in the SCN.

To keep the momentum going during the Read-A-Thon, we created a goal of 5,000 minutes of reading and updated our



*The SCN staff putting together the Read-A-Thon starter packs*



The SCN staff celebrating the win in front of the new library. From Left to Right: Megan Marcinek, Shannon Macort, Casey Carr, Theresa Gisondi, Lauren Katcher, Jeannine Hoffman.

Read-A-Thon “Minute Tracker” every day. The Minute Tracker, which stood at the entrance of the SCN, was a handmade meter that tracked the number of minutes spent reading. It provided a visual reminder to the parents of our goal and how many minutes were still needed. We ended the Read-A-Thon with 5,344 minutes and surpassed our goal.

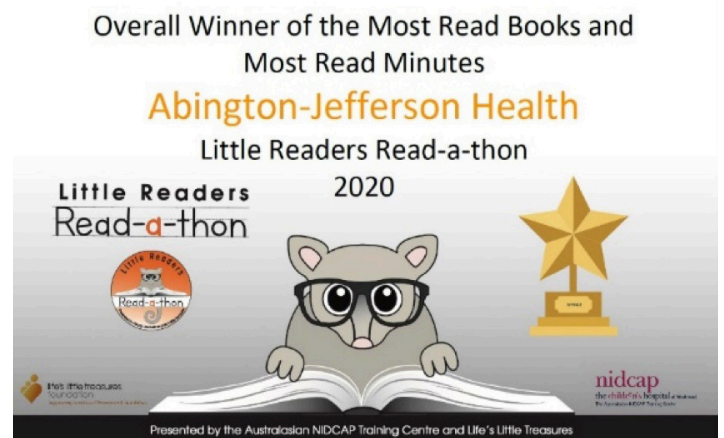
The passion and time the staff put into this event made it successful. They came in on their own time and put together the starter packs, designed the advertisements, and took time themselves to read to all the babies.

The nurses described the Read-A-Thon as empowering for our parents, as they felt they were making a positive impact on their child. It was heartwarming to walk through the unit and see parents interacting and reading together to their infant. One of the families who participated in the Read-A-Thon told us weeks later that they continue to read to their infant every night because of the Read-A-Thon.

Winning the Read-A-Thon was very exciting because we knew we did the best we could for our families. We did not know what to expect going into the event, but now seeing all the good that has come from it, we will continue this annual tradition. We are honored to be able to participate with hospitals around the world and promote this simple, yet impactful intervention in the SCN.



Family participating in Read-A-Thon. (Used with permission)



The winner's certificate