



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cleveland Kids' Book Bank Launches 2026 Books Like Me Campaign to Expand Access to Diverse Children's Books

Community leaders unite to help every child discover books that reflect their world and inspire a lifelong love of reading.

CLEVELAND, OH (June 24, 2026) — The Cleveland Kids' Book Bank (CKBB) is proud to announce the launch of its [2026 Books Like Me Campaign](#), a community-wide initiative dedicated to ensuring that every child has access to books that reflect the rich variety of families, cultures, experiences, and perspectives that make up our community.

The campaign, running through July 31, 2026, seeks to raise funds to purchase brand-new children's books that complement the hundreds of thousands of donated books distributed annually by the community.

Research consistently shows that children are more likely to engage with reading when they can connect with the stories they hold in their hands. Children's literature scholar Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop famously described books as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors"—helping children see themselves, understand others, and imagine new possibilities for their futures.

"At the Cleveland Kids' Book Bank, we believe every child deserves to own books," said **Natalie Friedl, Executive Director**. "Books Like Me is about building home libraries that spark joy, curiosity, empathy, and a love of reading. When children see their own experiences reflected in a story, they understand that their voices and dreams matter."

Today, approximately **84% of the children served by the Cleveland Kids' Book Bank are children of color, while only about 4% of donated books feature the broad range of characters and experiences represented in the communities the organization serves.** The Books Like Me Campaign helps bridge that gap by supporting the purchase of carefully selected, high-quality children's literature.



A generous partnership with **Reading Is Fundamental** will match all campaign donations, dollar-for-dollar, up to **\$15,000**, doubling the impact of every gift.

Books purchased through the Books Like Me campaign become part of classroom libraries, educator resource collections, the organization's Cavs Book Bus presented by KeyBank, and are part of the hundreds of thousands of books distributed annually through schools, early childhood centers, healthcare providers, and community organizations across Greater Cleveland.

The 2026 Books Like Me Campaign is guided by a distinguished volunteer committee of civic, business, education, and community leaders.

Campaign Co-Chairs

Judy Payne
Quartez Harris

Campaign Committee

Margaret Bernstein
Annie Ertle
Krystle Hayes
Rhonda Crowder
Jazmyne Lewis
Angie Gunawardana
Freddy Collier
Constance Bohanon
Dave Grunenwald

"Our committee represents a shared belief that literacy opens doors," said Campaign Co-Chairs Judy Payne and Quartez Harris in a joint statement. "By investing in books that both reflect children's own experiences and introduce them to new perspectives, we help build stronger readers and stronger communities."

Community members can support the Books Like Me Campaign by making a financial contribution, organizing a fundraiser, volunteering at Cleveland Kids' Book Bank, or helping spread awareness about the importance of building home libraries for every child.

To learn more or make a gift, visit www.kidsbookbank.org.

**13913 West Parkway Rd.
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www.kidsbookbank.org



About the Cleveland Kids' Book Bank

The mission of Cleveland Kids' Book Bank is to foster literacy and a love of reading by distributing free books to children through collaboration with community partners. Since opening in 2016, the organization has distributed more than 5.5 million books to children across Greater Cleveland, helping families build home libraries and ensuring that every child has the opportunity to own books. The Kids' Book Bank moved into a 24,000 sq. ft. space in October 2025 after completing a successful \$2 million capital campaign in less than 12 months

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