**United Way of Rhode Island Volunteer Engagement**

**Annual Children’s Book Drive (April and May)**

**UWRI:**  United Way of RI changes lives and strengthens communities by working together with groups and community volunteers. Education is important to us and we work to help kids fall in love with learning. We support afterschool and summer programming across the state. We are a partner in RI Reads, working to double the number of Rhode Island third graders reading at grade level. Annually we hold a Children’s Book Drive to put books into the hands of children to support reading.

**Background:** UWRI started our Annual Children’s Book Drive in 2012, bringing in over 186,000 books which have been distributed to children across the state to build home libraries and to help prevent summer learning loss. The books collected are gently used and new children’s books, for babies to middle school students.

**Project:** This sheet explains how to organize a book drive. Whether you are a community member that would like to gather books from your friends and neighbors, or a family who enjoys volunteering and you want to have your children help collect books for kids who don’t have many, this sheet will explain how to do that.

**Supplies Needed:**

Collection bins  
Poster or flyer materials

***Step 1: Register Your Drive With United Way***

Anyone interested in this project should contact [bookdrive@uwri.org](mailto:bookdrive@uwri.org) to register. This will allow us to send you customizable posters and information about the book drive.

***Step 2: Brainstorm and Plan***

Figure out how you want to run your book drive. There are many ways you can design it. So use your creativity. Some considerations could include:

* + Identify the timeline for this project. The book drive runs in April and May, with June 1 this year’s Day of Action book sorting project. Allow ample time to communicate about the drive to your potential book donors, allowing time to go through their books at home or purchase books. A drive may last several weeks or the full two months. Or a drive can be a single day if it is connected with an event or occurrence.
  + Identify people you can ask to donate books:
    - Who in your spheres of influence might have books they’d like to donate? (Be creative. One donor last year went to yard sales and volunteered to take any unsold children’s books at the end of the day to donate to the book drive.)
    - Who do you know who you could ask to donate books? (Family, friends, schools, workplace, neighborhood business’ customers)

***Step 3: Arrange Collection Logistics***

* Where will you collect books? Are their permissions you need to either participate in book collection or to place collection bins?
* What are some convenient, visible, indoor locations (so that supplies don’t get wet), where people regularly gather or pass through that you could collect books?
* Prepare collection bins (plastic 18 gallon storage bins often work well as do copy paper boxes). Decorate the container and make sure its purpose is clearly marked. Put a flyer or poster on the container giving the details about your drive.
* Let the site know the timeframe of the drive and how often you’ll be picking up the supplies, as well as your contact information so they can reach you if the bin is full and needs to be emptied.

***Step 4: Get the Word Out***

* Download customizable book drive flyers and posters from United Way. Instructions for the downloads will be sent to you when you register at [bookdrive@uwri.org](mailto:bookdrive@uwri.org).
* Use our social media guide to let others know that you are collecting children’s books.
* Supply flyers and posters to your contacts to generate new book donors. Encourage them to rally friends and family members to donate.

***Step 5: Follow Through***

* Check collection bins regularly during the drive, and empty them when they begin to get filled.
* Don’t forget to remove your donation bin and recycle any remaining posters or promotional materials at the end of the project.

***Step 6: Get the Books to United Way***

* Fridays during April and May United Way accepts book donations at our 50 Valley Street, Providence location.
* June 1 is our Day of Action so all books must be onsite by that date.

For any questions, contact Janice Pothier Pac, Director of Volunteer Engagement at 401-444-0634 or Janice.pothierpac@uwri.org.