

# *Books for Newborns*

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Books for Newborns, a Hawaii District 5000 project kicked off on family literacy day November 1, 1998 and ran through March 2002.

The project entailed donating a “Books for Newborns” packet to local hospitals for distribution to every newborn child in the state of Hawaii. At the start of the program, each packet included a children’s book, a “Read to Me” infant T-shirt, literature on the importance of reading and early brain development and a library card application.

Books for Newborns, encourages parents to read aloud to their babies, promoting the importance of reading and increased the awareness of children’s literacy issues. Studies have shown that a baby who is read to has a head start in life, with an earlier understanding of language and sounds.

“Family Literacy is not only being able to read. It emphasizes the bond between parent and child. Reading strengthens vocabulary, increases imagination and builds a greater love for reading,” (Barbara Bush).

Rotary has partnered with other organizations to make this project a success. The organizations include Good Beginnings Alliance, Hawaii State Library Systems, Literacy and Lifelong Learning, Read to Me International, Pizza Hut Literacy Fund, The Library Foundation, The Hawaii Community Foundation, The Henry and Dorothy Castle Fund, Valenti Brothers Graphics Ltd., Aloha Airlines and Islands Marketing.

The community was very grateful for this gift of reading and it truly made a difference to our children of Hawaii and leaders of tomorrow.

The program was taken over by Read to Me International and it is now called “Books for Babies.”