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Consumers and Publishers Respond to Literacy Call Gift of 150,000 Kid's Magazines and Whole Foods Newsstand Campaign Pay Magazines Forward via U.S. Food Banks to Kids and Families Hungry to Read

Madison, WI— At 16, John Mennell, founder of MagazineLiteracy.org, and a friend cleaned out an abandoned school to create a teen center for their hometown. At 26, he knocked on the door of a food pantry with no food and stood in front of a grocery store to collect 2,000 pounds of groceries to fill the shelves. He spent a summer between Cornell semesters heading on foot from Ithaca to Candor, New York, to mentor teens starting a community newspaper, and walked from Washington to Boston to spotlight U.S. hunger. Thus, began a journey coming full-circle this week with a [first-time newsstand magazine drive](#) at Whole Foods that engaged thousands of consumers to share magazines for literacy, and a [gargantuan gift](#) of 150,000 *Boy's Quest*, *Hopscotch for Girls*, and *Fun for Kidz* magazines from the Edwards publishing family in Bluffton, Ohio that will be delivered to at-risk readers via food banks and Boys & Girls Clubs.

"The Edwards family has made an unprecedented gift for literacy that kickstarts our long-time dream to channel magazines to millions of eager readers via the nation's vast food bank network," explained Mennell. "The magazines will be put into the hands and homes of enough at-risk readers to fill every seat in two Super Bowl stadiums, via food banks and Boys & Girls Clubs in the midwest, and the [Community Foodbank of New Jersey](#), which serves 900,000 people each year - mostly children - in the region hardest hit by superstorm Sandy," he added.

Building momentum, Mennell's global literacy project just received 1,000 copies of *Popular Mechanics* that will go to teens in maker mentoring, and science and technology programs, 2,000 *Owl Kids* sent to Inuit children north of the Arctic Circle in Canada, pallets of *Condé Nast* magazines, and hundreds of *Food Network* magazines for culinary job training programs operated by food banks. "I read *Popular Mechanics* and other magazines cover-to-cover as a teen and still do - it's the reason for MagazineLiteracy.org," explained Mennell.

"With titles for every reading level and interest, we know that magazines are enormously powerful for literacy - especially for reluctant readers. Paying magazines forward fuels our impact, but there are millions more readers to reach," said Mennell. "This weekend at Whole Foods, we spoke to over 1,000 consumers. There are tens of thousands of newsstands across America visited by tens of millions of consumers who love to read and share their magazines. Imagine the reach possible by marshaling a magazine industry-wide response to literacy. There is a role to play for every individual and every company throughout the entire supply chain - from the paper mill to the printer to the publisher, and from the mailroom to the boardroom," he added.

The *U.S. Dept. of Education* says there are over 1 million homeless students. The *Census* reports that 16 million kids live in poverty. *Reading is Fundamental* says two-thirds of children in poverty live in homes with no books. "A child unable to read is a child lost, unable to excel in any subject, and adults unable to read were once children who didn't learn how," explains Mennell. "Our mission is put magazines into hands and homes to end poverty," he said.

Early on, MagazineLiteracy.org received funding from Austin Kiplinger and enjoys support from throughout the magazine industry. "To reach our full promise, we need publishers and editors to walk with us on this journey - to underwrite operations, to partner on circulation and PSA display advertising campaigns, and to tell our stories to all the citizens of the world" said Mennell.

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