



Dear fellow Tocqueville Society members and friends,

During National Reading Month, as we focused ourselves on volunteerism that encouraged reading and the importance of children's literacy, we were shocked to learn about an alarming literacy crisis facing our region. Only 33% of fourth-grade students in Michigan are proficient readers. As you all know, illiteracy can cause immeasurable damage to an individual's emotional and intellectual development and can limit a child's ability to achieve a fulfilling and successful adult life.

We had to take action.

We can give more children a chance to thrive by increasing access to books. Studies show that children need a print-rich environment, which means access to at least 100 books. Unfortunately, less than 10% of households in our region meet this threshold, and 61% of our region's households are in neighborhoods that lack public libraries and bookstores. For many children, books are an unaffordable and unfamiliar luxury.

In our final months as chairs of the Tocqueville Society, we call upon you to join us in donating 150 books to fill one Little Free Library. In addition, we have set a goal to raise \$40,000 to support five Scholastic school book fairs, in which children select books to take home and keep. These efforts will focus on neighborhoods that are book deserts, and we are personally pledging match gifts of up to \$25,000 for this purpose.

Together, we can promote reading in schools and communities to drive student achievement and success. This is a top priority for the long-term success of our community's children. Our impact must reflect the power that we know this dedicated

group of leaders holds. Please [click here](#) for information on how to donate books, make a financial contribution and learn more about United Way's literacy initiatives.

When we reflect on our own experiences, we cannot remember a time our children did not have a book in hand. We cherish the memories of reading to our daughters, and the powerful moments when they shared their interest with us through the books they read and thoughts they discovered. We are eager to give more families this same experience. We need your passion, commitment and generosity to make this happen!

With much appreciation and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, written in a cursive style. The signature reads "Hans-Werner Kaas" followed by "Anke Kaas". The first name is written in a more formal cursive, while the second name is more fluid and connected to the first.

Hans-Werner and Anke Kaas