

Tanner receives gift of books for smaller ER visitors

The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) promoted early education in southwest Georgia with a gift of books for young visitors to Tanner Health System's emergency departments through the Tanner ReadER program.

The gift included "Amari's Adventure," a book created by The Rollins Center for Language & Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School.

The book offers reading tools for parents, including a QR code that links smartphones to the Atlanta Speech School's READ strategy at www.atlantaspeechschool.org/read. With tips and reading guides, the READ strategy helps parents engage children in conversation, nurture critical thinking, build language and vocabulary, and helps children realize the power of their own voices while reading with them.

Guided by research documenting the high return on investment associated with early learning and care, GEEARS' mission is to inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on quality



Dr. Tom Fitzgerald of Carrollton Emergency Physicians, and Gina Grnach, administrative operations leader of the emergency department at Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton, accept a book donation for the Tanner ReadER program from Mindy K. Binderman, executive director of the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students. Tanny the Turtle, the Tanner ReadER program's mascot, was also on hand for the book presentation.

early learning and healthy development for children ages birth to 5.

Millions of Georgia school children reach fourth grade without learning to read proficiently, putting them on track to drop out of school. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 71 percent of fourth-graders in Georgia scored below proficient reading levels in 2009, and 22 percent of children in Georgia ages 1-5 were read to less than three days a

week.

By 2020, GEEARS' vision is for all Georgia students to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to "read to learn" by third grade.

The Tanner ReadER program shares this vision by providing age-appropriate books to every child who visits one of Tanner Health System's three regional, 24-hour emergency departments. The books help foster an interest in reading and give parents

an opportunity to share an escape with their child into a story, away from the trauma or illness that made their emergency visit necessary.

The Tanner ReadER program is the vision of Dr. Tom Fitzgerald, a board-certified emergency physician and medical operations leader for the emergency department at Tanner Medical Center/Carrollton, and his colleagues at Carrollton Emergency Physicians.

"Reading is the foundation of a lifelong love of learning," said Fitzgerald. "When a child is able to take a book home and take ownership of that book, it also inspires them to take ownership of their education."

"We are very pleased to support the Tanner ReadER program," said Mindy K. Binderman, executive director of GEEARS. "Tanner Health System clearly understands how early exposure to books benefits children, their families and the entire community. A growing body of research reflects that children who receive high-quality early education are more likely

to graduate high school, attend college and are better equipped for the work force. The foundation of skills needed in school and the workforce is built during a child's first five years."

Research conducted by Dr. James Heckman, Noble Memorial Prize-winning economist at the University of Chicago, illustrated that early education yields a significant return on investment through increased workforce productivity and reduced societal costs of welfare and crime. Every \$1 invested in high-quality early education saves \$7 in the future, as a result of lower demand for social services,

reduced crime rates and increased tax revenues.

"We are deeply grateful to Mindy Binderman and to everyone in the GEEARS organization for their donation, and for all of their efforts to end childhood illiteracy," said Fitzgerald. "These books will really make a difference to the children who receive them."

To learn more about how you can support early childhood education, please visit www.GEEARS.org. To learn more about the Tanner ReadER program, please visit www.Tanner.org/Main/TannerReadER.aspx or contact Tanner Medical Foundation at 770-812-GIFT (4438).