

# PRESS KIT

The Heart of America Foundation®

The Heart of America Foundation®

## Program Overviews

### About Us

The Heart of America Foundation®, a national nonprofit headquartered in Washington, D.C., uniquely promotes volunteer service and literacy. The organization inspires acts of service and a love of reading by building community and providing children in need with the tools to read, succeed and make a difference.

Committed to education and volunteerism, The Heart of America Foundation® engages volunteers by putting books into the hands of children who need them the most. Through the Books From The Heart® and READesign® programs, The Heart of America Foundation® transforms school libraries and education spaces in under-resourced communities into vital and vibrant centers of learning that become the heart of a school.

Since 1997, The Heart of America Foundation® has provided over one million children living in poverty with over 3.5 million library and take-home books. And, the organization has engaged volunteers in more than 1,075,000 hours of service to communities nationwide.

### Books From The Heart®

The Books From The Heart® program puts books into the hands of children who need them the most.

- ♥ Elementary schools and students receive new, age-appropriate books to replenish school, classroom and home libraries. At book giveaway events, staff and volunteers read to children and introduce them to the topic of volunteerism.
- ♥ Books From The Heart® provides new books for newly renovated READesign® libraries and books for students to take home after library unveilings.
- ♥ Children participate in volunteer-led Books From The Heart® book drives by collecting new and like-new books to share with under-resourced elementary schools. This project introduces young people to community service and provides meaningful hands-on experiences.

[www.heartofamerica.org/books](http://www.heartofamerica.org/books)

### READesign® Library Makeover

The READesign® Library Makeover transforms school libraries, in addition to children’s dreams and futures.

- ♥ The READesign® program saturates school environments with new books. Remodeled library spaces are revitalized with improved technology, empty bookshelves are replenished with high quality books and the old library becomes a vibrant learning center—the new heart of a school.
- ♥ Each READesign® Library Makeover includes vibrant colors, specialized artwork, up to 2,000 new library books, improved technology, kid-friendly furniture and up to seven books per child to create their personal home libraries.
- ♥ The READesign® experience connects people to caring, compassionate community service for children in need. Community members, local youth and corporate sponsors volunteer in library beautification activities, book distributions, reading circles and other customized projects.
- ♥ The READesign® program renews community support in enriching student lives and helping them regain lost opportunities for learning.

[www.heartofamerica.org/readesign](http://www.heartofamerica.org/readesign)

### Heroes of the Heart®

The Heroes of the Heart® Awards Program is a national recognition program that identifies inspirational individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to enrich the lives of others.

- ♥ The National Heroes of the Heart® Award honors adults who embody the values at the heart of America. These remarkable people elevate the standard of social responsibility, ennoble the human race with the quality of their lives and provide hope and inspiration.
- ♥ The Christopher Reeve Award and scholarship is presented each year to an outstanding youth who has demonstrated tremendous courage and compassion in serving his or her community.
- ♥ The Gee Whiz Kids® Award and scholarship honors exemplary children, age 12 and under, who represent the best of their schools and communities.

[www.heartofamerica.org/heroes](http://www.heartofamerica.org/heroes)

RECOGNITION



ONE OF THE BEST  
CATALOGUE FOR PHILANTHROPY

The Heart of America Foundation® has been honored with:

The 2008 Target  
“Best of the Bullseye Award for Innovation”

—

The 2009 Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz  
Foundation Youth Partnership Award Finalist  
designation

—

Featured on the Oprah Show and Ellen

The Heart of America Foundation®

## Fact Sheet

### Our Impact

*The Heart of America Foundation® has...*

- ★ Impacted the lives of over **one million children** since 1997.
- ★ Replenished, redecorated and revitalized **more than 250 school libraries and education spaces** in high need areas across the U.S. through its READesign® Library Makeover program.
- ★ Provided children living in poverty with **over 3.6 million books**—a value of **over \$22.3 million**.
- ★ Reached more than **316,000 children in Washington, D.C.** by distributing **948,800 books valued at \$5.84 million**
- ★ Helped volunteers serve **more than one million service hours** in the community.

### At a Glance

*The Heart of America Foundation®...*

- ♥ Was founded in 1997 by husband-and-wife team Bill and Angie Halamandaris, who have dedicated their lives to help improve the lives of children living in poverty.
- ♥ Is a national nonprofit headquartered in Washington, D.C.
- ♥ Uniquely combines volunteerism and literacy through its programs.
- ♥ Inspires service and a love of reading.
- ♥ Engages sponsors and community volunteers to model how communities can work together to make a difference in schools.
- ♥ Helps schools and communities to teach children the importance of literacy and education.
- ♥ Puts books into the hands of children in need to provide them with the tools to read, succeed and make a difference.
- ♥ Distributes new books for school, classroom and home libraries to help students gain resources needed to succeed in school.
- ♥ Transforms school libraries in underserved communities across the U.S. into vital and vibrant centers of learning that become a safe haven and the heart of a school.

### Why We Promote Literacy and Encourage a Love for Reading

- ★ 61% of low-income families have no books in their homes.
- ★ Children who have not developed basic literacy skills by the time they enter school are 3 to 4 times more likely to drop out.
- ★ Seven out of ten fourth graders cannot read at grade level.
- ★ Low literacy can lead to crime, unemployment and poverty.
- ★ Recent studies confirm that the availability of reading material is the strongest predictor of a child's ability to read and succeed academically.

### What People Are Saying

- ★ "I consider the work of the Heart of America Foundation to be very important. I send you my prayers and best wishes for the success of your humanitarian endeavor." (*The Dalai Lama*)
- ★ "The Heart of America Foundation is making a wonderful difference!...A special thanks...for seeing critical needs and finding innovative ways to fill them...These acts and the many others you perform are restoring hope in the lives of children throughout the country. By giving children an opportunity to be leaders and givers, you reveal the compassion and community spirit that truly is the heart of America." (*Laura Bush, Former First Lady of the United States*)
- ★ "The READesign of the library has been an upgrade for our school in many ways. It has had a positive impact on everyone's attitude. It has provided a homey, cheerful area for reading and learning. The students love it. The physical space is now welcoming, and most importantly, kid-friendly. One child commented, 'Can I live here...all day?' Another said, 'I want this to be my library FOREVER!'" (*Valerie Perez, Assistant Principal, Gentilly Terrace Elementary School*)
- ★ "I had so much fun participating in this event, and am so proud that [my company] is involved in a project such as this one. I'm so glad that we were able to make such a positive influence in this area." (*Janay, Volunteer*)

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## Special Projects & Events

### *READesign® Reading Corner Program*

The Heart of America Foundation® **READesign® Reading Corner** program extends the benefits of the READesign® Library Makeover Program on a smaller scale. Program elements include brand new, age-appropriate books for students to take home, library quality books for the READesign® Reading Corner collection, vibrant paint, “wow” factor design elements, and new furnishings such as a reading rug, bean bags, and mobile book carts. Through each project, both the school and home environments are enhanced with more books. Furthermore, the program promotes community volunteerism and creates lively and invigorating reading spaces for children. Each READesign® Reading Corner is presented via a school-wide community reading celebration, to show off the new space, excite children and families about reading, and provide books for children’s homes and classrooms.

### *Other Special Projects and Events*

Other Special Projects and Events have included:

- ★ **Adopt a School Month**
- ★ **Cherry Blossom Book Distribution Event**
- ★ **National Global Youth Service Day**
- ★ **NEA’s Books Across America**
- ★ **Prudential Spirit of Community Awards Book Distribution Event**

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## Our Leadership

### **Angela (Angie) Halamandaris - Bio**

**Co-Founder and President**

**The Heart of America Foundation®**

**Angie Halamandaris** is Co-Founder and President of The Heart of America Foundation®, a national nonprofit headquartered in Washington, DC, that uniquely promotes volunteer service and literacy. She leads the organization in its focus to inspire acts of service and a love of reading by building community and providing children in need with the tools to read, succeed, and make a difference. Committed to education and volunteer service, Heart of America engages volunteers by putting books into the hands of children who need them the most. Since 1997, through Angie’s leadership, Heart of America has touched over 1,275,000 lives, provided underserved children with 3.28 million books (a value in excess of \$20.6 million) and revitalized over 200 school libraries.



**Angela & William Halamandaris**  
Co-Founders of The  
Heart of America Foundation®

Ms. Halamandaris’ work has been both proactive and responsive—from establishing the national “Heroes of the Heart®” recognition program to highlight heroes of all ages throughout the US for their community building efforts; to reaching out to students to provide a “Day of Hope” a year after the Columbine High School massacre in Denver, Colorado; to responding to needs and creating a national awareness campaign to aid families after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001; to collecting new backpacks, school supplies and books for the young Gulf Coast victims of Hurricane Katrina; to engaging 250,000 students in restoring Gulf coast school libraries, classrooms and home libraries destroyed by the storms by providing books for children in need. Ms. Halamandaris now leads her staff and volunteers to focus their efforts on the needs of children living in areas of poverty through the Books From The Heart® and READesign® Library Makeover programs; not just in disaster plagued cities, but around the country in other areas experiencing hardship. These projects engage corporate volunteers, youth volunteers and other members of the community in service and community involvement through library beautification and improvement activities, book distributions and one-on-one reading activities with children.

Ms. Halamandaris leads the organization with guiding principles, such as respect, integrity, character, compassion, cooperation, positivity, and trust. Modeling her work after a quote by Albert Schweitzer, “Example isn’t the best way to teach, it’s the only way,” Ms. Halamandaris has shown her commitment to improving the lives of children in need through volunteer service to organizations such as the National Capital Area Foundation of the March of Dimes, WETA-TV, DCPS Library Task Force, The Caring Institute, The Frederick Douglass Museum, The Hall of Fame for Caring Americans and other foundations and committees. Ms. Halamandaris has been recognized by the Junior League of Northern Virginia as the 2007 “Woman of Vision Award” recipient. She is also a graduate of the 2009 class of the Leadership Greater Washington program. Under her leadership, The Heart of America Foundation has been honored with the 2008 Target “Best of the Bullseye Award for Innovation,” the 2009 Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Youth Partnership Award Finalist designation and was named “One of the Best” by the 2009-10 Catalogue for Philanthropy: Greater Washington. In 2013, Angie represented Heart of America at the Nassau County BOCES “Most Influential People & Organizations for Public Education in Nassau County, NY” Gala. Furthermore, the collaborative “Investing for Good” campaign between Heart of America and Capital One led to a finalist status in the Halo Awards “Best Education Campaign” category.

Before co-founding The Heart of America Foundation, Ms. Halamandaris helped develop Give Kids the World Village, a 75-acre resort for terminally-ill children in Orlando, Florida, and helped raise more than \$10 million through corporate partnerships for that effort. Now at The Heart of America Foundation, she has successfully developed lasting relationships with organizations such as Capital One, Target, FedEx, NFL Players Association, and other notable organizations.

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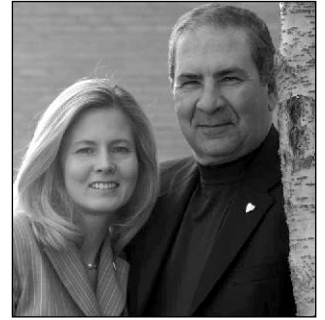
## Our Leadership

### **William (Bill) Halamandaris - Bio**

**Co-Founder and Chairman (Full-Time Volunteer)**

**The Heart of America Foundation®**

**Bill Halamandaris** is Co-Founder and Chairman of The Heart of America Foundation, a national nonprofit headquartered in Washington, D.C., that uniquely promotes volunteer service and literacy. Serving as a full-time volunteer, he helps guide the organization's focus to inspire acts of service and a love of reading by building community and providing children in need with the tools to read, succeed and make a difference. Committed to education and volunteer service, The Heart of America Foundation engages volunteers by putting books into the hands of children who need them the most. Through the Books From The Heart® and READesign® programs, the organization revitalizes school libraries and reading spaces in under-resourced communities into vital and vibrant centers of learning that become the heart of a school. Through his work, Mr. Halamandaris has touched the lives and the hearts of over a million children and adults across the country.



**Angela & William Halamandaris**  
Co-Founders of The  
Heart of America Foundation®

In addition to The Heart of America Foundation, Mr. Halamandaris is also the co-founder of the Caring Institute and three other national nonprofit organizations: the Foundation for Hospice and Homecare, the National Association for Home Care, and HealthRight. In addition, he is a long-time board member and past Chairman of America's Charities, a consortium of 120 national charities. He also serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Jane Goodall Institute and the Read it LOUD! Foundation, founded by Wally Amos.

Before devoting himself to the non-profit world, Mr. Halamandaris had a long and distinguished career in public service. Over the course of 20 years, he served with the Department of Interior, Bureau of Budget and Finance; the Pentagon Counter Intelligence Force, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence, MDW; as Counsel, Chief Investigator, and Director of Oversight, U.S. Senate; and as Staff Director of the House Select Committee on Aging, Subcommittee on Health and Long-Term Care.

Mr. Halamandaris' work has been featured on 60 Minutes, ABC 20/20, Dateline, Good Morning America, NBC Today, CBS This Morning, NBC Newsday, CNBC, CNN, Sonya Live, Parade Magazine, USA TODAY, and The Visionaries. He has written and produced two documentaries for PBS – *Voices of the People* (1994) and *Suffer Not the Little Children* (1987). He is also the co-editor of *Caring Quotes: A Compendium of Caring Thought*, was a contributing editor to *Caring People Magazine*, and a frequent columnist for *Executive Excellence* and *Personal Excellence* magazines. He is the author of several books, including: *Profiles in Caring: Young Adults*, *His Name Is Today*, *Love and Hate: The Story of Henri Landwirth*, *Be the Light: A Blueprint for a Happy and Successful Life*, *The Heart of America: Ten Core Values That Make Our Country Great* and his newest publication, *Quotations from the Heart*. Mr. Halamandaris received his education at the George Washington University and the Columbus School of Law. He was honored with a Doctorate in Human Letters by the University of North Florida in 1995.

Mr. Halamandaris often explains that every decision at The Heart of America Foundation must be driven by one simple question: *What's best for the children?* Each of the organization's programs is designed to maximize the involvement of others looking to serve and build community, with the understanding that we can solve society's most intractable problems when people of common interest come together.

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*The Heart of America Foundation lovingly recognizes  
the contributions of founding Executive Advisory  
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*President of the United States, 1974–1977*

**Viktor Frankl, M.D., Ph.D. (1905–1997)**

*Author, “Man’s Search for Meaning”*

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The Heart of America Foundation®

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