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## **Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education program wins international recognition**

The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education program has been awarded a 2013 Silver World Young Reader Prize by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

The Times NIE program was awarded the 2013 Silver World Young Reader Prize in Enduring Excellence for its *Reading with the Rays - Read Your Way to the Ballpark*, a summer reading program produced in partnership with the Tampa Bay Rays and the Rays Baseball Foundation.

“This is a fabulous way to involve students in reading during summer vacation, a time of disengagement for young reader programs. The strategy could transfer to any country's main sport!” the judges commented.

*Reading with the Rays* was created to address “summer slide” and is aimed at encouraging children in grades 3-5 – the most crucial grade levels when developing reading skills – to read more during the summer break and to visit their public library often.

Research shows that children, especially those living in poverty, lose the equivalent of two months of reading during the summer. By the end of elementary school, they may be over two years behind their peers in reading. Two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning.

*Reading with the Rays* encourages kids to avoid summer reading loss by reading 24 hours over the summer months. Participating libraries track their progress and award prizes for reaching certain goals, including free tickets to a Tampa Bay Rays game. The program is made possible through a partnership with the public library systems in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Manatee, Citrus, Pasco and Hernando counties.

Since 2006, when the Rays Baseball Foundation first teamed up with the *Times* NIE program to produce *Reading with the Rays*, the program has continued to expand and increase in popularity. In 2012, more than 16,000 bay area students participated in the six-county program, reading a total of 182,521 hours.

The award will be presented at the WAN-IFRA Youth Engagement Summit, which will take place December 2-4, 2013, in Warsaw, Poland.

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### **About the Tampa Bay Times NIE program**

NIE is a cooperative effort between schools and the *Tampa Bay Times* to encourage the use of newspapers as an educational resource – a “living textbook”. Since the 1970s, NIE has provided Tampa Bay-area schools with class sets of the *Times* plus original curriculum supplements, teacher guides, lesson plans, educator workshops and many more resources no cost to schools, teachers or students. NIE teaching materials, informational text, cover a variety of subjects and are consistent with Florida’s Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and the Common Core State Standards. Visit [tampabay.com/nie](http://tampabay.com/nie) for more information about NIE and to download electronic editions of NIE curriculum supplements, including *Reading with the Rays*.

### **About the Rays Baseball Foundation**

The Rays Baseball Foundation, the official charity of the Tampa Bay Rays, focuses primarily on youth and education programs in the Tampa Bay region that make a measurable difference in the community. Key contributors to the Foundation include Rays owners, players, sponsors, fans and employees. Among the players who contributed to the Foundation in 2013 are Evan Longoria, Joel Peralta and Ben Zobrist. More information about the Rays Baseball Foundation can be found at [raysbaseball.com/communityreport](http://raysbaseball.com/communityreport).

### **About WAN-IFRA**

WAN-IFRA is the global organization of the world’s newspapers and news publishers. It represents more than 18,000 publications, 15,000 online sites and over 3,000 companies in more than 120 countries. More information about WAN-IFRA and a complete list of 2013 World Young Reader Prize winners can be found at [wan-ifra.org](http://wan-ifra.org).