

Fall 2009 **i**MPACT SPEAKER SERIES

Robin Ferst

Founder and President, Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy

Inspired by a community program she read about in the local newspaper, Robin Ferst started the Ferst Foundation in 1999, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering literacy and creativity in pre-kindergarten children. Replicating Dolly Parton's Imagination Library project in Morgan County, Georgia, Robin strives to instill her lifetime love of reading in every child. The program has distributed over 1.5 million books to more than 81,000 children. Motivated by her success, Robin imagines the possibility of enrolling every child in the state.

Before establishing the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, Robin worked in commercial mortgage banking specializing in FHA Multifamily Housing directing the regional offices of national mortgage companies. While living in Louisiana and Florida, she managed real estate investments and development, as well as individual trust investments. She has a BS in Business Administration.

Now living in Atlanta, Robin is a member of the Telecommunication Commission Board of Directors. She serves as a founding board member of the Community Foundation of Morgan County. In partnership with the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta, Robin initiated the Morgan County Early Childhood Reading Coalition, which served as the pilot for the Georgia Rural Library Initiative. Robin was honored as a 2005 Traditional Home Classic Woman for her spirit of volunteerism and with the 2005 11Alive Community Service Award. She received the American Medical Women's Association "Speaking with an Active Voice" award in 2001, was designated as an A&E Community Hero in 2002 by Shirley Franklin, Mayor of Atlanta.

Robin's passion is giving children the opportunity to know the power of reading. She was diagnosed with a hearing loss at age six and books became the most important part of her world. Books gave her a confidence that she might not have known otherwise. Reading opened up a world of possibilities and helped her overcome challenges. Reading was always fun. Although Robin is now profoundly deaf, her accomplishments stem from a caring family who took the time to read to her, and her ability to learn anything by reading.

