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Reach Out and Read Launches “Summer of a Million Books” Campaign *Pediatricians, family physicians in South Carolina join nationwide effort to put one million books in the hands of children*

Columbia, SC July 1, 2010 -- Reach Out and Read, the nationwide school readiness program, launched a bold new campaign to give a brand-new, age-appropriate book to one million children in need before Labor Day. The *Summer of a Million Books* campaign unites Reach Out and Read pediatricians and family physicians at 4,500 hospitals and clinics across the country in their mission to prepare America’s youngest children to succeed in school.

Reach Out and Read **South Carolina** is leading the effort in our region and its medical providers pledged to distribute more than **30,240** books to children in need over the next two months.

Reach Out and Read developed the *Summer of a Million Books* in conjunction with United We Serve’s *Let’s Read. Let’s Move.* initiative, which aims to promote community service and combat illiteracy and childhood obesity. Reach Out and Read is a national partner of *Let’s Read. Let’s Move.*, an Administration-wide effort led by President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.

“According to the most recent NAEP reading test, **72%** of our state’s fourth graders cannot read proficiently,” said **Callee Boulware, State Director** of Reach Out and Read **South Carolina**. “We can’t afford to wait until children arrive at school to help them develop basic reading and language skills. We must intervene much earlier—in the first years of life—when we can have the greatest impact on their cognitive development and prospects for success. That’s what the *Summer of a Million Books* is all about.”

Reach Out and Read targets children who are at greatest risk for school failure and illiteracy, and provides them with high quality children’s books and their parents with reading tips and guidance on the importance of reading aloud. Fourteen research studies confirm that Reach Out and Read works – families served by the program read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten better prepared to succeed, with larger vocabularies, stronger language skills, and a six-month developmental age over their peers.

The key to Reach Out and Read’s success is the messenger: pediatricians and family physicians. Participating doctors and nurse practitioners incorporate the Reach Out and Read model into every regular checkup for children between 6 months of age and the time they enter kindergarten. Because 96% of U.S. children see their doctor at least once a year and because of the trust that parents have in their child’s doctor, the pediatric checkup is the ideal opportunity to promote early literacy and school readiness.

Last year, Reach Out and Read's 26,500 participating medical providers served 3.9 million children and families at 4,500 hospitals, clinics, and pediatric practices nationwide. The **120** Reach Out and Read Programs in **South Carolina** serve a total of **125,000** infants, toddlers, and preschoolers annually.

If it succeeds, the *Summer of a Million Books* campaign will provide one million families with the tools and the guidance they need to prepare their children to succeed in school. In order to accomplish that goal, Reach Out and Read's doctors and nurse practitioners must distribute more than 18,500 books every day between Monday, June 21 (First Day of Summer), and Monday, September 6 (Labor Day).

Reach Out and Read is asking for all Americans to join the campaign and help ensure that every child arrives at kindergarten ready to read and prepared to excel.

How can I help?

1. Donate a book or sponsor a child online through Reach Out and Read's [Virtual Book Drive](#).
2. [Organize a book drive](#) for the Reach Out and Read Program in your community.
3. Most importantly, [read to the children](#) in your life every day.

Learn more about the *Summer of a Million Books* campaign here:
<http://www.reachoutandread.org/summer/>

Learn more about Reach Out and Read-South Carolina here:
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