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City's First Readers Brings Together Community for Literacy Celebration at Woodhull Medical Center

Event draws hundreds of young readers from all corners of the borough

(BROOKLYN, NEW YORK) – City's First Readers (CFR) – a citywide initiative created by the New York City Council promoting early childhood literacy, hosted a literacy celebration for children and local families at the NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull medical center in Brooklyn yesterday morning.

The literacy celebration brought together the ten partners in the initiative and families in order to spread the word about the City's First Readers initiative. The goal of the program is to increase the importance of early literacy, support parents as their children's first and most important teacher and to have fun. The families from Brooklyn were able to spend an afternoon merging fun and literacy by participating in bilingual read-aloud story time, music and movement, fun activity stations, and book giveaways. Materials were also provided for Spanish-speaking families.

City's First Readers is a collaboration of ten nonprofit organizations, and is facilitated by Literacy Inc. CFR fosters the literacy development of NYC children, ages 0-5. Each nonprofit organization offers critical resources for parents, early childcare providers, and teachers working in high-need, high-potential neighborhoods across New York City. CFR aims to ensure that children entering school are ready to read and primed for educational success.

Literacy Inc., Video Interaction Project (VIP), Parent Child Home, United Way, Brooklyn Public Library, Jumpstart, Reach Out & Read, New York Public Library and the Committee For Hispanic Children and Families all worked together with New York City Health + Hospitals/Woodhull medical center to host this event.

CFR works hard to correct disparities between families that lack financial resources and those who do not. Recent statistics show that 70% of New York City's third grade students are reading below grade level. Amongst the City's poor, 76% are not reading on grade level. A child from a low-income family has, on average, just one book at home, whereas a

high-income child has over 50. Increased literacy exposure in early developmental years has been strongly linked to greater success and greater economic opportunities in life.

City's First Readers initiative sponsors Council Members Stephen Levin and Antonio Reynoso attended the event.

“Investment in early childhood literacy provides a foundation for all our City’s children to succeed, especially those typically left behind. I’m proud to continue to support City’s First Readers, and look forward to the ongoing progress of literacy for all New Yorkers,” **said Council Member Stephen Levin.**

“The City’s First Readers Initiative brings together a set of outstanding organizations that are making real changes in the lives of children and families citywide. Without this initiative, hundreds of children may not have had access to early literacy programs, which can help open doors later in life. I want to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito and my colleagues in the Council for recognizing this and increasing the initiative’s funding this year. I am so impressed with what the groups have accomplished so far, and look forward to continuing to work with this transformative program,” **said Council Member Antonio Reynoso.**

“Acquiring literacy is a challenge facing young children in all neighborhoods throughout New York City,” **said Literacy Inc. Executive Director Shari Levine,** “but especially in high-poverty areas and immigrant communities. City’s First Readers provides access to quality reading resources and the extra support that these emerging readers need. Learning to read on time helps to break the cycle of poverty and increases opportunities for future success.”

"This literacy event at NYC H+H/Woodhull generated incredible excitement about reading aloud for so many parents and is a testament to the power that this initiative has for children of New York City," **said Alan L. Mendelsohn, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Population Health.**

“NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull is convinced that social determinants of health care must be factored into the total care of the family. That is why Woodhull has been a strong partner with other community organizations that promote literacy. We are a proud site for Reach Out and Read and a long-time site and partner with the Video Interaction Program. These programs have improved familial bonding and the developmental milestones of our children. We look forward to the continued success with these efforts,” **said Gregory Calliste, Chief Executive Officer, NYC Health + Hospitals/Woodhull.**

ABOUT CITY'S FIRST READERS

City's First Readers is an initiative of the New York City Council made possible by Council Member Stephen Levin and Council Member Antonio Reynoso, under the leadership of Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. The initiative joins multiple literacy focused nonprofits in an effort to close the achievement gap by surrounding children and families with opportunities that build strong foundations in early literacy. These partnering organizations include: Brooklyn Public Library, Jumpstart, Literacy Inc., The New York Public Library, Parent-Child Home Program, Queens Library, Reach Out and Read of Greater New York, Video Interaction Project, United Way and the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families. Together, these programs help make sure our youngest residents begin school ready to be successful students. Learn more at www.citysfirstreaders.com.