PRESS RELEASE
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READ FOR THE RECORD 2008:
MAYOR BALLARD HIGHLIGHTS EARLY READERS CLUB

INDIANAPOLIS – (October 2, 2008) Today, Mayor Greg Ballard joined other adults in Indianapolis, and leaders across the nation, in reading with children as part of Jumpstart’s Read for the Record 2008 campaign designed to bring attention to the importance of early literacy. Throughout the day, Mayor Ballard and members of his staff read Corduroy by Don Freeman to students at St. Mary’s Child Center (SMCC). Volunteers from Pearson Education are reading at various Indianapolis Public Schools locations.

“I appreciate having this opportunity through Read for the Record to highlight the issue of early literacy today,” said Ballard. “Going forward, our community must find ways to address the issue, and I am pleased that parents and caregivers in and around Indianapolis are fortunate enough to have access to a local early
literacy program aimed at helping families prepare their children for school. Through United Way of Central Indiana’s *Early Readers Club*, families have an opportunity to build their home library with quality children’s books. For a holiday, a birthday, or for no particular occasion at all, books are a wonderful gift and a wise investment.”

*Early Readers Club* encourages parents and caregivers to read to their child starting day one by building home libraries that children can call their own. Families can register to receive 12 high-quality children’s books each year until the child’s sixth birthday, providing countless opportunities for kids and parents to read together. “Reading aloud to young children is one way parents and other adults can help young children be better prepared to succeed in school. Parents tell us that children who receive these books beg to read to over and over again,” said Ted Maple, Director of Success By 6 for United Way of Central Indiana.

Studies suggest the number of books in a home is a strong indicator of a child’s future reading ability setting him or her on a track for success in school and in life. “Often times, you’ll find policy makers focusing on short-term benefits, but I am asking citizens to look further down the road. While we cannot trace all educational weaknesses to a child’s inability to read, I believe investing in early literacy will lead to lower dropout rates and more success for children during the high school years and beyond.”

Experts suggest that young children should be read to on a regular basis, for approximately 20-30 minutes per day. But a national and state survey found that only about half of Indiana’s families read to their child on a regular basis. Mayor Ballard is also committed to helping St. Mary’s achieve 100% participation in Early Readers Club. Furthermore, Mayor Ballard will be reaching out to other preschools and day care centers to help educators get more books into the hands Indianapolis’ youngest citizens.

“We know that children need 1,000 ‘lap hours’ of reading time with a caring adult before beginning school,” said Connie Sherman, Executive Director for St. Mary’s. “According to one study, this typically happens for middle-class children, who are read to 1,000 to 1,700 hours before first grade. But the same study shows that this is NOT the case for children in low income families, who are read to an average of just 25 hours throughout that same time span. Through *Early Readers Club*, more families are afforded the opportunity to read together. So I join the Mayor in encouraging all adults to spend time reading with the children in their lives.”

**PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS**

**About Jumpstart** ([www.jstart.org](http://www.jstart.org))
Jumpstart’s research-based model pairs trained college students with young children in one-to-one partnerships that are designed to develop literacy, language, and social skills. Founded in 1993 at Yale University, Jumpstart is currently engaging 3,500 college students in service to more than 13,000 children in 20 states and nearly 70 communities across the country. National corporate sponsors include: American Eagle Outfitters, Pearson, Sodexo, and Starbucks. Jumpstart also partners with Americorps.

**About Read for the Record** ([www.readfortherecord.org](http://www.readfortherecord.org))
Jumpstart’s Read for the Record is a campaign designed to bring attention to the importance of early education. By encouraging hundreds of thousands of children and adults to read the same book on the same day, Jumpstart aims to break a world record and to make early education a national priority. Today, Children and adults will read together at events nationwide in schools, libraries, stores, hotels, playgrounds, offices, and homes.

**About Pearson** ([www.pearsonfoundation.org](http://www.pearsonfoundation.org))
The Pearson Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Pearson plc, one of the world’s leading media and education companies. The Pearson Foundation extends Pearson’s commitment to education by partnering with leading nonprofit, civic, and business organizations to provide financial, organizational, and publishing assistance across the globe. The custom limited edition of the Viking children’s classic *Corduroy* has been published and distributed by Pearson, ensuring that 100 percent of the proceeds from the sale of this book directly support Jumpstart’s work with children from low-income communities across America. Pearson
and its people across the U.S. and around the world are taking part in Jumpstart’s Read for the Record celebrations and working with governors, mayors, PTAs, schools, libraries, and local organizations to spread the word and highlight the importance and the power of reading. The Pearson Foundation is also providing more than 100,000 copies of *Corduroy* to at-risk children in school districts and community organizations worldwide.

**About St. Mary’s Child Center** ([www.stmaryschildcenter.org](http://www.stmaryschildcenter.org))
St. Mary’s Child Center (SMCC) is a not-for-profit agency, providing a high quality early childhood program for children ages 3-5 whose families are impacted by poverty. Transportation, therapies, social work services and a Reggio inspired curriculum are provided for 200 children. No child has ever been denied services for financial reasons. SMCC also provides professional development activities and mentoring for community educators who work with children in poverty. SMCC is a United Way agency.

**About Early Readers Club** ([www.uwci.org/erc](http://www.uwci.org/erc))
The Early Readers Club℠ is part of United Way of Central Indiana’s *Ready to Learn, Ready to Earn* priority, a comprehensive focus on early learning, school readiness and adolescent development. ERC encourages parents and caregivers to read to their child starting day one by building home libraries that children can call their own. Families can register to receive 12 high-quality children’s books each year until the child’s sixth birthday, providing countless opportunities for kids and parents to read together. Currently, more than 11,000 children in Hancock, Hendricks, Marion and Morgan counties are members of ERC. For more information and to register, please visit [www.uwci.org/erc](http://www.uwci.org/erc).

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