PRESS RELEASE

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‘CITIZEN’S READ TO FEED DAY’ KICKS OFF SUMMER READING PROGRAM, BENEFITS GLEANERS FOOD BANK

INDIANAPOLIS -- Mayor Greg Ballard, First Lady Winnie Ballard and City-County Councillor Michael McQuillen joined Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library staff, Indy Reads and other community partners today to kick off ‘Citizen’s Read to Feed Day.’ This is a summer literacy program, developed to promote reading as a way to engage young minds and help prevent the “summer slide” in reading comprehension, while giving children a unique opportunity to contribute to the welfare of the community though support of Summer Reading Program partner Gleaners Food Bank.

“We are here to celebrate the kickoff of Citizen’s Read to Feed Day, but I encourage you to support this cause not just for one day, but throughout the entire year,” said Mayor Ballard. “We never stop learning and we must encourage our youth to continue to feed their hunger for creativity and education. In the same way, the need for food is never ending and your support of Gleaners and other like organizations knows no season.”

Read to Feed Day encourages parents to sign up their children for the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library’s 2010 Summer Reading Program, “Read to Feed: Mind and Heart.” Participants in the Summer Reading Program earn points for all levels of reading activity, which can be exchanged for a variety of great prizes donated by a number of community organizations. This year, children can donate a non-perishable food item for Gleaners and earn 20 points, or they may donate 20 points that they have already earned so that grocery partner The Kroger Company will make a food contribution on their behalf.

“Reading at a young age is a proven indicator for future learning success,” said Laura Bramble, Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library CEO. “The Summer Reading Program provides a tremendous opportunity for young people to enhance their reading skills and be rewarded for their reading achievement.”

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The Summer Reading Program also has another component that allows middle and high school students to serve as “Reading Giants,” by volunteering to read aloud to younger children at the library. Teens can earn Summer Reading Program points, a baseball cap and a $25 gift card for this volunteer activity, all made possible through the generous support of Kroger.

To highlight this component, a special reading event will take place at all 23 IMCPL locations as well as the Beech Grove Public Library at noon on Thursday, June 24. City officials will read aloud to young children at each library location. Children who attend these reading events will receive Summer Reading Program points for listening to the stories. All attendees are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items which Library branch staff will collect to donate to Gleaners Food Bank that day. Plus, the city officials who read stories will be presented Reading Giants baseball caps to tout them as Honorary Reading Giants.

"The Library's Summer Reading Program is a crucial tool for families to keep their students on track over the summer break,” said McQuillen. “I personally benefitted from this program growing up in Indianapolis years ago and hope that others will take advantage of this great literacy opportunity as well."