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**Senator Mark Pryor Reads Aloud to Young Children at
Arkansas Children's Hospital in Support of Reach Out and Read School
Readiness Program**

Little Rock (August 30, 2012) -- Pediatricians and nurses at Arkansas Children's Hospital are sending families home from checkups with free books and a very important prescription – "read aloud to your children." Today, Senator Mark Pryor visited the state's only pediatric medical center, not only to cheer them on, but to practice what doctors preach by reading to a group of young patients.

Arkansas Children's Hospital participates in Reach Out and Read, a program that prepares America's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together.

Doctors, nurse practitioners, and other medical professionals incorporate Reach Out and Read's evidence-based model into regular pediatric checkups, by advising parents about the importance of reading aloud and giving developmentally-appropriate books to children.

Through Reach Out and Read, each child starts kindergarten with a home library of up to 10 books and a parent who has heard at every health supervision visit about the importance of books and reading. The program begins at the 6-month checkup and continues through age 5, with a special emphasis on children growing up in low-income communities.

The program has gained broad bipartisan support in the United States Congress.

"By teaching children literacy skills early on, Reach Out and Read is helping thousands of Arkansans start their education out on the right foot," Senator Pryor said. "I applaud Arkansas Children's Hospital for participating in this worthwhile program and helping Arkansas children achieve academic success."

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Arkansas Children’s Hospital is one of 30 programs in Arkansas that participate in Reach Out and Read, providing books to more than 36,704 children annually.

Families served by Reach Out and Read read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills, better prepared to achieve their potential.

“Research shows that if you intervene in the first five years of life and partner with parents, you can dramatically improve the early literacy skills of a child, putting them on the track for success in school and in life,” said Reach Out and Read Chief Executive Officer Earl Martin Phalen.

“Childhood development experts tell us that the most important thing that parents can do to prepare their children to succeed in school is to read aloud to them every day. “

The Reach Out and Read model is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the program has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention.

Reach Out and Read doctors and nurses distribute over 6.5 million books to more than 4 million children and their families annually at 4,946 pediatric practices, hospitals, clinics and health centers in all 50 states.

More than 28,000 medical providers nationwide currently participate in Reach Out and Read.

For more information, visit www.reachoutandread.org.

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