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Gov. Mike and First Lady Ginger Beebe, Congressman Vic Snyder Read to Young Children at Little Rock Pediatric Clinic in Support of Reach Out and Read

Research Shows Program in Which Doctors Distribute Books at Checkups Improves Youngster's Language Development and School Readiness

(Little Rock, AR) Nov. 13, 2008 – Doctors and medical staff at Little Rock Pediatric Clinic are sending their youngest patients home with free books and important advice for their parents – “Read to your children every day.” Today, Governor Mike and First Lady Ginger Beebe and Congressman Vic Snyder (AR-02) visited the practice and read to a group of young children, emphasizing the importance of reading aloud.

Little Rock Pediatric Clinic participates in Reach Out and Read (ROR), a national children’s literacy program that focuses on young children at risk of entering school unprepared to learn. At every checkup, clinicians in ROR guide and encourage parents to read aloud to their young children every day, and give each child a carefully selected new, developmentally and culturally appropriate book. By the time that child enters school, he or she will have a home library of up to 10 books.

Reach Out and Read has one of the strongest records of research support of any school readiness intervention. Studies show that parents who get books and counseling on reading aloud from their doctors and nurses are more likely to read to their young children, read to them more often, and provide more books in the home. Children exposed to Reach Out and Read show improved language development, giving a child as young as 2-years-old a six-month head start developmentally.

“Governor Beebe, the First Lady and Congressman Snyder have been terrific champions for Reach Out and Read,” said Kathy Vining DeLone, Executive Director of ROR-Arkansas. “We’re grateful for their strong leadership on behalf of young children across our state.”

Governor Beebe said he supports ROR-Arkansas because it uses the existing health care system to deliver literacy counseling and age-appropriate books during the critical years before children enter school. “Through this program, parents will learn the best ways to read to their children in a setting where they are already learning how to best care for their children,” Governor Beebe said. “Coordinating with clinics is a natural fit that drives home to parents the importance of literacy development in early childhood.”

Reach Out and Read has gained broad bipartisan support in Congress, and Congressman Snyder has been a leading advocate in the House of Representatives for the program’s federal funding.

"I commend the doctors, nurses, and staff at Little Rock Pediatric Clinic for their outstanding advocacy on behalf of children’s literacy," said Congressman Snyder. "Reading to

infants, toddlers, and young children every day is a critically important component of early childhood development and contributes greatly to a child's ability to arrive at school ready to learn and achieve. Reach Out and Read distributes tens of thousands of books to our state's children each year in support of this worthy goal, and I am proud to support this outstanding program."

Reach Out and Read Arkansas currently serves over 28,000 infants, toddlers and preschoolers at 18 locations across the state, providing them with more than 48,000 new books this year. Reach Out and Read Arkansas became an official coalition of Reach Out and Read National in March of this year. Prior to that, the non-profit was known as Arkansas Well Child Reads.

Nationally, thousands of doctors this year will give 5.4 million new books to 3.3 million low-income families at almost 3,800 health care sites nationwide. Reach Out and Read serves about 25 percent of America's at-risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read was the sole American recipient of the 2007 UNESCO International Literacy Prize and the only American program featured at the White House Conference on Global Literacy.

Since it was founded in 1989, Reach Out and Read has trained more than 50,000 doctors and nurses who have given over 20 million books to children in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. International programs modeled on Reach Out and Read have been started in Bangladesh, Italy, Israel, the Philippines, England, and Canada. For more information, please visit www.reachoutandread.org.

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About Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read is a national, non-profit children's literacy program that works with medical providers to reach the children at greatest risk – children aged 6 months to 5 years living at or near poverty. Medical providers participating in Reach Out and Read give books to their youngest low-income patients at check-ups and advise their parents about the importance of reading. More than 20 million books have been distributed through Reach Out and Read, which currently serves 25 percent of the most impoverished children in the U.S. The only American literacy program featured at the recent White House Conference on Global Literacy, Reach Out and Read is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Reach Out and Read has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. Peer-reviewed studies indicate that parents who get books and literacy counseling from their doctors and nurses are more likely to read to their young children, read to them more often, and provide more books in the home. Low-income children exposed to the program have shown improvements in language development, a critical component of school readiness. Children who participate in Reach Out and Read score 4 to 8 points higher on vocabulary tests, giving 2-year-olds a 6 month head start developmentally.

Reach Out and Read is working to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care. More than 50,000 doctors and nurses have been trained by Reach Out and Read since its founding in 1989. This year Reach Out and Read will provide 5.4 million new books to 3.3 million children at 3,797 health care sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. International programs modeled on Reach Out and Read have been started in Italy, Israel, the Philippines, England, Bangladesh and Canada. UNESCO awarded Reach Out and Read an international 2007 Confucius Prize for Literacy in recognition of its particularly effective contribution to the fight against illiteracy. For further information, please visit Reach Out and Read's website at www.reachoutandread.org.