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Reach Out and Read Announces National Leadership Update

Brian Gallagher Named Organization's Executive Director; Benita Somerfield Joins Board of Directors

Boston, MA (July 28, 2014) – Brian Gallagher, Reach Out and Read's Acting Executive Director since January, has been named Executive Director of the Boston-based early literacy nonprofit. The Board of Directors voted unanimously on the appointment.

"I'm proud and honored to serve Reach Out and Read as Executive Director," said Gallagher. "I look forward to expanding on my work with our Board of Directors and staff to guide Reach Out and Read forward during this exciting time. On the heels of the recent American Academy of Pediatrics policy promoting literacy an essential part of primary care, Reach Out and Read's work is more important – and recognized – than ever. Among my top priorities is to continue to support our network of medical providers who every day deliver Reach Out and Read's high-quality literacy intervention to millions of children and families nationwide."

Gallagher has been with Reach Out and Read since 2007, previously serving as the organization's Director of National Programs, providing strategic leadership to all aspects of the organization's national programmatic activity, including program metrics, medical provider training and professional development, quality assurance and improvement efforts, and special initiatives, as well as efforts to increase the number of children and healthcare providers who participate in Reach Out and Read.

The Board also unanimously voted to invite longtime Reach Out and Read supporter and literacy champion Benita Somerfield to join the Board of Directors.

Somerfield was the Founding Executive Director of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, serving the Foundation from 1989 to 2012. Prior to that, she held several roles at Simon & Schuster Publishing, including Senior Vice President, Corporate Communications; and President, Workplace Resources.

Somerfield is currently Chair of the International Committee of the Library of Congress Literacy Awards and Vice-Chair of the Governing Board of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in Hamburg, Germany. She was instrumental in helping Reach Out and Read secure a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation in the 1990s to help the organization expand beyond Boston.

"As a longtime advisor to Reach Out and Read, I am thrilled to join the organization in an official capacity by serving on the Board of Directors," said Somerfield. "I look forward to drawing on my background in literacy – and my passion for the organization – to help propel Reach Out and Read to the next level as the premier early literacy organization in the country."

Reach Out and Read is the evidence-based, national nonprofit organization that promotes early brain development, literacy, and school readiness by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud at regular pediatric checkups. The model includes providing a new, age-appropriate book for each child to take home at checkups from 6 months through 5 years.

Nationwide, Reach Out and Read's doctors and nurses serve 4 million children and their families annually at 5,000 hospitals, health centers, and clinics in all 50 states, with a focus on centers that serve low-income communities.

For more information on Reach Out and Read, please visit www.reachoutandread.org

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