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REACH OUT AND READ MIDWEST NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAURA HOLMS

The nonprofit leader will build on momentum following expansion into Iowa and Nebraska

DES MOINES, Iowa (May 14, 2025) – [Reach Out and Read](#), a national nonprofit leading the charge in promoting early childhood literacy and healthy early relationships, announces Laura Holms has been named Executive Director of Reach Out and Read Midwest. Holms joins the organization at a pivotal time — six months ago, the nonprofit expanded into the region, building plans to support the 360,000 children under the age of 5 across Iowa and Nebraska.

A seasoned nonprofit leader with more than 25 years of experience in community engagement, fundraising, and strategic development, Laura brings a passion for early literacy and a proven track record of serving diverse communities. Her leadership will be instrumental in guiding the organization's continued growth across Iowa and Nebraska, where Reach Out and Read clinicians served 83,717 children and distributed 125,710 books at well-child visits in FY24.

"Laura's passion for equity, community, and early childhood development aligns powerfully with the mission and values of Reach Out and Read," said Ruth Coleman, Ph.D., Senior Director of Growth for Reach Out and Read National. "Her leadership will be key to deepening our impact across the Midwest — strengthening relationships with families, pediatric clinicians, and community partners as we work together to give every child a foundation for lifelong success."

In Iowa and Nebraska, only 39 percent of infants and toddlers are read to each day — placing many children at a disadvantage when it comes to early learning and critical caregiver bonding. With 80 percent of brain development occurring in the first three years of life, these early moments are essential for shaping a child's cognitive, social-emotional, and long-term health outcomes. Reach Out and Read's evidence-based model is designed to close this gap by reaching children — especially those in under-resourced communities — through pediatric checkups, where families receive guidance and age-appropriate books to build strong early literacy habits, starting at birth.

"There is nothing more powerful than giving every child the tools to thrive from the very beginning," Holms said. "Reach Out and Read Midwest stands ready to help families build

strong relationships, healthy brains, and bright futures for children across Iowa and Nebraska. I'm excited to collaborate with our dedicated clinicians, communities, and families to expand early literacy access — especially in communities where it's needed most — and ensure all children have the opportunity to succeed.”

Before joining Reach Out and Read, Holms served as Director of Development for Catholic Charities and Iowa Health Foundation; Executive Director for Amanda the Panda Grief and Loss Center; State Director for Best Buddies Iowa; and Executive Director for Urbandale Community Action Network, where she developed new programming for immigrant and refugee youth and provided school support for underserved families. Most recently, Holms served as the Director of Stewardship and Development for the Diocese of Des Moines, focusing on strengthening fundraising efforts and community engagement.

In FY24, Reach Out and Read provided 7.7 million free books across 9.3 million well-child visits nationwide. Nearly two-thirds of the children served are from low-income families.

To learn more about plans for Reach Out and Read Midwest, go to reachoutandread.org/midwest

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About Reach Out and Read: As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, Reach Out and Read leverages the near-universal reach of the pediatric well-child visit to support caregivers in fostering healthy relationships with their young children through shared reading. In FY24, Reach Out and Read served more than 4.6 million children and provided 7.7 million free books across 9.3 million well-child visits. Around 70 percent of the children Reach Out and Read serves are from low-income families. The only national pediatric literacy model endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read serves children in every state across the U.S., through 6,500 clinics and the expertise of 39,000 clinicians. Recent research in a [peer-reviewed study published in Academic Pediatrics](#) confirms the program's effectiveness in increasing the frequency of parental reading, which builds early language and literacy skills and strengthens family relationships.