



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Salina Sowell | Program & Communications Coordinator
Phone: 334-202-4279 | Email: stsowell@roralabama.org

RX FOR SUMMER READING ENCOURAGES CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO UNPLUG AND PLAY THIS SEASON

Reach Out and Read-Alabama's 16th annual campaign

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (June 2, 2025) – Across 15 summers, Reach Out and Read-Alabama's summer reading campaign has featured a variety of beloved characters and stories, including a hungry caterpillar, dancing barnyard animals, a big red dog in a storm, a bunny visiting the doctor, a superhero kid, a sleepy tiger, a cat in sunglasses, a cookie-eating mouse, and a curious monkey. This year, Reach Out and Read-Alabama celebrates 16 years of Rx for Summer Reading by encouraging families to unplug, tune in, and have fun with "Baby Unplugged: PLAY!" by John Hutton, MD. From books and blocks to pets and boxes — a perfect way to spend an afternoon — "Baby Unplugged: PLAY!" celebrates classic childhood experiences and icons, where education is a natural byproduct of a child's desire to play, explore, and connect — no screens, batteries, or Wi-Fi required!

Reach Out and Read embeds early literacy in pediatric care, providing books and guidance to help families make reading a meaningful part of their daily lives. Starting with the newborn well-child visit, clinicians work with families to emphasize the importance of reading aloud with their child — and the impact of the everyday moments they share. Creating a stable, safe, and nurturing environment is the single most effective way for parents to strengthen their child's resilience and develop their brain.

Reach Out and Read-Alabama's Rx for Summer Reading kicks off June 2 and runs through Aug. 1. "Baby Unplugged: PLAY!" activities and events sponsored by Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites will be held across the state.

Reach Out and Read-Alabama is once again collaborating with All About Books, a family-run children's book company passed down through generations. Specializing in providing high-quality, affordable children's books to nonprofit literacy organizations throughout the United States, All About Books joined forces with Blue Manatee Press in 2024, led by respected pediatrician, John Hutton, MD, who has made significant contributions to research on shared reading and its profound effects on early brain development. Through his pioneering work, Hutton has examined interactions between caregivers and children, the format of stories, and the impact of screen time using MRI technology. Furthermore, he has developed and

rigorously tested SHARE/STEP — a structured method for reading with infants that has transformed early literacy practices.

“I am thrilled and honored for ‘Baby Unplugged: PLAY!’ to be featured in support of this vital, impactful initiative,” Hutton said. “The ‘Baby Unplugged’ series is very special to me, as these were the first books I wrote, inspired by a pediatric residency project. Each book celebrates an alternative activity to screen time, and ‘PLAY’ is a greatest-hits summation of these. It’s the ninth in the series, showcasing wonderful things kids can do indoors and outdoors to get them away from screens and plugged into the real world.”

The evidence-based Reach Out and Read program builds on the unique relationship between parents and clinicians to develop critical early reading skills in children, starting from infancy. With more than 30 peer-reviewed studies and a recommendation by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read is an effective intervention incorporating early literacy into pediatric practice and equipping parents with tools and knowledge to ensure their children are prepared to learn when they start school. Families learn about the significant role they play in supporting their child’s growth and development during regular, one-on-one well-child visits.

Currently, 90 pediatric and family practices and clinics across 28 counties serve as Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites, reaching 38 percent of Alabama’s children under age 5. Reach Out and Read-Alabama is a program of the Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics.

To learn more about Reach Out and Read-Alabama, go to roralabama.org

###

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.