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**Reach Out and Read and Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation
Partner to Empower Caregivers as Child's First, Best Teachers**

Milwaukee, Wisc. (July 9, 2025) - An innovative partnership between Reach Out and Read Wisconsin and the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation will allow medical providers at area Watertown Regional Medical Clinics and ProHealth Medical Group clinic to promote reading among parents of infants and young children. At routine well-child visits, families will receive a free, age-appropriate book and fun, eye-catching information about the importance of reading with their child.

In addition, Reach Out and Read Wisconsin is piloting a "prescription for reading" program. The prescription will enable 4- and 5-year-old children to collect a special, free book at their local library when signing up for a library card.

"The mutual commitment to the power of positive early relationships and the benefit of shared reading makes this partnership, between Reach Out and Read and TalkReadPlay — supported by the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation, a natural fit," says DeDe Williams, Reach Out and Read Wisconsin Executive Director. "We are excited to offer more resources for families and caregivers in the area while piloting innovative ways to connect them with local libraries."

The partnership brings together the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation and its TalkReadPlay initiative with Reach Out and Read, which has 308 participating sites in medical clinics across Wisconsin. Together, the organizations are excited to provide valuable tools and resources that support early development, because time spent reading, singing, and playing with young children has the greatest influence on their early brain development. These everyday moments strengthen the relationship between parents or caregivers and their children and set the foundation for all future learning, and ultimately, success in school and life.

Participating clinics include Watertown Regional Medical Center clinics in Watertown, Johnson Creek, Juneau, Lake Mills and Waterloo and ProHealth Medical Group clinic in Watertown. Libraries participating in the partnership include Hustisford Community Library, Jefferson Public Library, Johnson Creek Public Library, Juneau Public Library, LD Fargo Public Library (Lake Mills), Karl Junginger Memorial Library (Waterloo), and Watertown Public Library.

“Our focus is on building strong families and thriving communities, and the power of something as simple as reading together each day can have a measurable impact on our kids’ future success,” says Ben Wehmeier, President and CEO of the Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation. “Every family in our region deserves the knowledge and opportunity to set their children up for a bright future, and that’s exactly what this new partnership helps achieve.”

About Reach Out and Read Wisconsin: Reach Out and Read Wisconsin provides more than 146,300 children and their families in 60 counties with books and resources to empower parents as their child’s first and best teachers. Reach Out and Read Wisconsin is a two-generation intervention built and backed by science and a growing body of academic research. It utilizes the existing medical infrastructure to encourage supportive, educational conversations with parents on the importance of reading aloud and the impact of nurturing relationships. For more information about Reach Out and Read Wisconsin, visit reachoutandread.org/wisconsin.

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.

About Gateway Watertown Community Health Foundation: To date, the Foundation has invested more than \$51.1 million in its strategic priorities. The Foundation’s mission is to inspire collaboration, mobilize resources and encourage innovation to measurably improve the wellbeing of our community. Created out of the 2015 joint venture transaction between Watertown Regional Medical Center (WRMC) and LifePoint Health, the Foundation continues to steward WRMC’s legacy of community investment, mobilizing endowment earnings from the original transaction along with ongoing charitable contributions from WRMC. To learn more about the foundation and supported initiatives, visit www.watertownhealthfoundation.com.