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REACH OUT AND READ WISCONSIN RECEIVES \$300K GRANT FROM THE JOHNSON CONTROLS FOUNDATION

The grant will help improve early literacy outcomes for children coordination with Northwest Milwaukee medical clinics and the Milwaukee Public Library

MILWAUKEE (Feb. 2, 2026) – Reach Out and Read Wisconsin, a nonprofit leading the charge in promoting early literacy and healthy early relationships through pediatric care, was awarded a substantial grant that will have a lasting impact in the Milwaukee area. The Johnson Controls Foundation will support Reach Out and Read Wisconsin with \$300,000 over two years through a Smart and Healthy Neighborhood Grant.

The two-year grant will fund the 'Prescription for Literacy' initiative. This community initiative aims to improve early literacy outcomes for children and will be a coordinated effort among medical clinics in northwest Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Public Library. Together, Reach Out and Read Wisconsin and the Milwaukee Public Library hope to build a literacy-rich community that supports school readiness, strengthens family engagement, and promotes equity in access to literacy resources.

"The Johnson Controls Foundation's commitment to Milwaukee through the Smart and Healthy Neighborhood Grant is inspiring," said Reach Out and Read Wisconsin Executive Director DeDe Williams. "This two-year, \$300,000 grant gives the 'Prescription for Literacy' initiative the power to deeply integrate literacy support within pediatric care across northwest Milwaukee. Our collaboration with the Milwaukee Public Library is central to this vision, and we look forward to making a lasting impact on early literacy and relational health outcomes and school readiness for thousands of children."

The grant will allow Reach Out and Read Wisconsin to expand its programming in northwest Milwaukee, onboarding the program at Milwaukee Health Services, Inc.-Isaac Coggs Heritage Health Center and Ascension All Saints-Family Health Center, while sustaining Children's Wisconsin Good Hope Pediatrics and Aurora Health Care-Good Hope Clinic, who already prescribed the program.

The initiative will provide young children with developmentally appropriate books and literacy guidance during 0-to-5-year-old well-child visits as part of the Reach Out and Read program at their clinic. Families will receive a "prescription" to visit the Good Hope or Villard Square

Branch of the Milwaukee Public Library, where they will be given a book and library card, receive a tour of the library, and be invited to a community-wide early literacy event hosted by Milwaukee Central Library.

“This initiative not only promotes a strong foundation for language and literacy development, but also builds sustainable connections between families, healthcare providers, and public libraries,” stated Williams. “Together, we are working to create a literacy-rich community that empowers parents, supports school readiness, and strengthens community bonds.”

Milwaukee Public Library will serve as a central partner in this initiative, connecting families with free literacy resources. Library staff will collaborate with pediatric clinics to implement the “Prescription Literacy” library card. Along with hosting an early literacy event, Milwaukee Public Library will provide programming for young children and promote family engagement opportunities.

“Milwaukee Public Library and Reach Out and Read share a deep commitment to early literacy and family engagement”, said Joan Johnson, Library Director of Milwaukee Public Library. “By expanding our partnership into pediatric clinics, we meet families where they are—offering books, resources, and support at a trusted point in their child’s care. Together, we can help ensure that every child has the opportunity to build strong early literacy habits from the very start.”

This program will serve an estimated 6,500 children and families in northwest Milwaukee, at almost 13,000 annual well-child visits.

To read more about Reach Out and Read’s mission and research-based model, visit ReachOutandRead.org.

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About Reach Out and Read Wisconsin: With 317 participating medical clinics across Wisconsin, Reach Out and Read Wisconsin provides more than 148,000 children and their families in 64 counties with books and resources to empower parents as their child’s first and best teachers. Reach Out and Read 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 Milwaukee Public Library: Milwaukee Public Library is an anchor institution that helps build healthy families and vibrant neighborhoods – the foundation of a strong Milwaukee. Since 1878, Milwaukee Public Library has been a free provider of education and information for residents of Milwaukee and beyond. With 13 locations, and more than three million items in circulation, MPL offers free access to a rich collection of materials both physical and digital, access to technology, classes, exhibitions, programming and more. From toddlers to scholars, MPL serves more than one million patrons who come through its doors annually and many more around the globe who use its resources at www mpl org. To offer this wide array of free programming, MPL relies on both public and private funding. Learn more about how to support Milwaukee Public Library at mpl org/support.