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TAYE DIGGS JOINS REACH OUT AND READ TO SPOTLIGHT IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Actor and children's author to receive Literacy Leadership Award at annual Reach Out and Read of Greater New York benefit; Diggs and Macmillan Publishers to donate more than 500 books.

NEW YORK CITY - (Sept. 30, 2026) - Helping more children grow up with books that reflect their families, communities, and cultures will take center stage at Reach Out and Read of Greater New York's Annual Benefit, "A Book for Every Child," on Oct. 20. The event will honor actor and children's book author Taye Diggs with the Reach Out and Read of Greater New York Literacy Leadership Award. Together with Macmillan Publishers, Diggs will donate more than 500 books to support the organization's efforts to bring diverse stories to families through pediatric care across Greater New York.

Through Reach Out and Read, pediatric clinicians provide culturally and developmentally appropriate books and guidance on shared reading during regular well-child visits, helping families make reading together part of a child's life from birth. Reach Out and Read works with literacy experts and clinicians to select engaging, developmentally appropriate books for children from birth to age 5, including bilingual books in 38 languages. Books that reflect families' experiences give clinicians another way to connect with caregivers and help children find a sense of belonging in the stories they share at home. Together, these books and guidance help families build meaningful moments of learning and connection in a child's earliest years.

"Every child deserves to feel that there is a place for them in the stories they grow up with," said Emily Marchese, Executive Director of Reach Out and Read of Greater New York. "Diverse books help make that possible. When clinicians share books that reflect the families they care for, they help make those stories part of everyday moments of connection. Taye Diggs and Macmillan Publishers are helping us put more stories within reach, so more children can discover a character who looks like them or a family that feels familiar while reading with someone they love."

More than 60 percent of children served by Reach Out and Read nationally are Black, Indigenous, or other people of color. In Greater New York, 88 percent of Reach Out and Read sites serve communities where a majority of residents are people of color. Families are more

likely to read together when they have access to books that embrace their culture, language, and identity.

Reach Out and Read's Book Buying Buddies initiative allows the organization to provide families with diverse, culturally relevant books, ensuring more children have access to stories that reflect their lives and communities. This year alone, Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and partners from across the Reach Out and Read network contributed more than \$1.6 million toward a bulk purchase, resulting in 800,000+ books for children and families throughout the country. Books will hit Reach Out and Read clinics early in the new year.

"We want clinicians to have a range of books that meets the needs of the families walking through their doors," said Dr. Lynette Fraga, CEO of Reach Out and Read. "That means looking at whose experiences are represented, which languages are available, and what parents and clinicians tell us is missing. As we reach more children, we need our selection to grow, too. Support from the publishing community helps give practices more options, so they can choose a book with each child and family in mind."

Reach Out and Read of Greater New York's 26th Annual Benefit coincides with the release of Diggs's newest children's book, "Prince Bedhead." Macmillan Publishers, a longstanding supporter of Reach Out and Read Greater New York, connected Diggs with the organization and is partnering with him to donate 250 copies of the new book and 250 copies of his previous titles which include, "Mixed Me!," "Chocolate Me!," "I Love You More Than..." and "My Friend!" During the program, Diggs will also present the Advocate for Diverse Books Award to Dr. Marcy Stein-Albert and Dr. Kathrin Balaoura of NYC Health + Hospitals/South Queens.

"Kids notice who gets to be the hero of a story," Diggs said. "I want children to open a book and see someone who looks like them or a family like theirs. That tells a child, 'There's a place for me here.' What I love about Reach Out and Read is that they help make those moments happen early, with a parent right there reading alongside them."

The benefit will be held Tuesday, Oct. 20, from 6 to 10 p.m. at Tribeca Rooftop in Manhattan. The evening is expected to raise more than \$300,000 to support early literacy across Greater New York, with an emphasis on providing diverse books to underserved communities throughout the five boroughs.

You can learn more about the nonprofit and purchase tickets at [Reachoutandreadnyc.org](https://reachoutandreadnyc.org).

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About Reach Out and Read of Greater New York: For over 25 years, Reach Out and Read of Greater New York has prepared young children for success by partnering with pediatric providers to integrate books and reading guidance into well-child visits, helping families build strong literacy routines and bonds at home. This evidence-based program fosters early literacy, encourages a love of reading, and strengthens family connections to support thriving communities. As part of the nationwide Reach Out and Read, the vibrant network reaches families across the United States, supporting 11 million well-child visits annually, including a more than 371,000 families in the Greater New York region alone. Through this nationwide work, over 11 million new books are distributed each year, more than 41,000 medical providers are engaged, and over 6,800 program sites offer reading guidance to families at every routine

well-child visit. The Reach Out and Read of Greater New York annual benefit celebrates philanthropists and community champions in the local region committed to advancing early literacy and family well-being. Reach Out and Read of Greater New York currently serves 39 percent of children 5 and under in the region, with plans to expand to 50 percent within the next five years. To learn more, visit: www.reachoutandreadnyc.org.

Reach Out and Read annually serves more than 4.8 million children in all 50 states. Learn more: reachoutandread.org.