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Contact: Ashley Pontius | National Strategies Public Relations
Phone: 813-409-4091 | Email: apontius@nspublicrelations.com

REACH OUT AND READ MINNESOTA'S 'BOOKS FOR NEIGHBORS' PROJECT WINS SILVER AT 2026 ANTHEM AWARDS

National honor recognizes innovative effort to bring books, comfort and connection to children and families facing barriers to health care.

BOSTON (Nov. 9, 2026) – Reach Out and Read Minnesota's *Books for Neighbors* initiative is named a Silver Community Voice winner in the 6th Annual Anthem Awards, earning recognition for its innovative approach to supporting children and families whose access to routine pediatric care is disrupted by fears surrounding immigration enforcement. Selected from more than 2,500 entries representing 43 countries, the initiative was honored in the Special Projects, Health category for extending the benefits of shared reading beyond the pediatric exam room and into the communities where families need support most.

Developed in response to growing concerns about families missing medical appointments and withdrawing from everyday activities, *Books for Neighbors* worked to bring nearly 10,000 children's books and caregiver resources directly to Minnesota families in early 2026. Through partnerships with local health care providers, mutual aid organizations and community nonprofits, the initiative extended Reach Out and Read's support beyond the pediatric exam room, delivering culturally relevant books and shared-reading resources through home visits and other community-based efforts. With contributions from publishing partners All About Books, Scholastic and Barefoot Books, along with a $25,000 commitment from Reach Out and Read, the project helped expand access to books and caregiver materials in English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong and Burmese Karen, providing families with opportunities for comfort, connection and early learning during a period of significant uncertainty. The initiative reflects Reach Out and Read's longstanding commitment to supporting healthy relationships between young children and their caregivers, recognizing that the simple act of sharing a book can offer stability and reassurance even when familiar routines are disrupted.

"Every child deserves the opportunity to feel safe, supported and connected to the people who care for them, especially during difficult times," said Kris Hoplin, Executive Director of Reach Out and Read Minnesota. "Books for Neighbors grew out of a very real need to reach families whose daily lives and access to care have been disrupted, and we're grateful to the community partners who have helped us bring books and meaningful moments of connection

directly to their homes. Winning a Silver Anthem Award is a powerful acknowledgement of what we can accomplish when we come together to put children and families first."

Presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts & Sciences, the Anthem Awards celebrate excellence in social impact and recognize organizations and initiatives advancing meaningful change in communities around the world. *Books for Neighbors* received the Silver Community Voice Anthem Award in the Special Projects, Health category, recognizing the initiative's impact in supporting children and families during a time of uncertainty.

"At its heart, Reach Out and Read has always been about the relationships that shape a child's earliest years, and this initiative demonstrates how important those connections become when families are navigating extraordinary challenges," said Dr. Lynette M. Fraga, CEO of Reach Out and Read. "Through the generosity of our partners and the dedication of our Minnesota team, we're finding new ways to bring the benefits of shared reading to families who may not be able to access them through traditional pediatric care. This recognition is a testament to the importance of meeting families where they are and ensuring that every child has opportunities to thrive."

Reach Out and Read Minnesota and *Books for Neighbors* is featured in the official 2026 Anthem Awards Winner Gallery at celebrate.anthemawards.com.

Anyone interested in donating or learning more about Reach Out and Read's efforts to support children and families can visit ReachOutandRead.org.

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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 FY25, Reach Out and Read served more than 4.8 million children and provided 9 million free books across 11.2 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.