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**The Vilsack Foundation to Gift
Reach Out and Read Iowa \$50,000**
Christie Vilsack to Make Literacy Legacy Contribution

Des Moines, Iowa – Known for her strong support of literacy initiatives and a long-time supporter of the Reach Out and Read program, Christie Vilsack will present a check for \$50,000 to Reach Out and Read Iowa from The Vilsack Foundation. This will support the early literacy program's efforts to link literacy and health by incorporating books and literacy guidance into every well-child visit for children 6 months through 5 years of age.

One of the most efficacious (and cost-effective, dollar-for-dollar) early brain interventions currently available, Reach Out and Read Iowa is part of a national organization that equips parents with tools and guidance needed to ensure their children have the chance they deserve for healthy development and success in school.

The gift will be announced and presented on Monday, June 10 at 1:00pm in the Main Lobby at Blank Children's Hospital at 1200 Pleasant Street in Des Moines. The first Reach Out and Read program established in Iowa was at Blank Children's Hospital in 1998.

Christie Vilsack was instrumental in establishing the Reach Out and Read Iowa Coalition as her literacy legacy through her leadership and a generous contribution from the Vilsack Foundation. Vilsack's interest in Reach Out and Read stemmed from her work as First Lady and with the Iowa Stories 2000 Foundation. She served as the Chair of Reach Out and Read Iowa's Advisory Committee until early 2009 and on the Boston-based National Reach Out and Read Board of Directors from 2006-2009.

"Early childhood is a time of extreme brain plasticity, with 700 neurological connections being formed each second. Thanks to The Vilsack Foundation support and Christie Vilsack's advocacy, Reach Out and Read Iowa will be able to continue to strengthen children's minds through early literacy guidance in pediatric clinics across Iowa", said Reach Out and Read Iowa Co-Medical Director, Dr. Amy Shriver.

The funding from The Vilsack Foundation will support the Reach Out and Read Iowa Coalition which consists of 86 programs and serves 55,000 children in Iowa. The Coalition works to raise awareness, recruit new sites, offer training and technical assistance, provide books to new and existing sites, build partnerships, and identify financial support.

"We're thrilled with The Vilsack Foundation gift to support and expand the Reach Out and Read Iowa program in Iowa," said Molly Olinger Topf, Coalition Leader for Reach Out and Read Iowa. "With this funding, we can reach more children and families through trusted health care providers that encourage parents to spend time reading with their children to support early reading skills like recognizing letters and sounds".

For more information about Reach Out and Read Iowa, please contact Molly Olinger Topf at 515-991-0872 or Molly@reachoutandreadiowa.org.

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Reach Out and Read Iowa Coalition is part of a national early literacy program promoting early literacy and school readiness by making physician offices and clinics a resource for early literacy, educating parents about the importance of reading to children, and giving books to young children at well child visits, targeting at-risk children 6 months through 5 years of age. Reach Out and Read Iowa serves nearly 55,000 children annually, providing more than 92,000 books at 86 clinical locations.