



MEDIA RELEASE

OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

400 Main Street, Suite 615, Knoxville, TN 37902

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rob Link Abbey Harris
215-4750 office 215-4579 office
320-2108 cell 705-1681 cell

November 19, 2019

Read City USA to Travel Around the World in 2020

Mayor Jacobs to close Read City USA's 250k hour challenge and announce Challenge 2020

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—In May 2019, Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs issued a challenge to the community, in the form of the Read City USA initiative, to read 250,000 hours and help make Knox County the most well-read community in America. Though a fun challenge, at its core Read City USA is a collaborative effort to help all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, learn to read early and well.

The goal of the 2019 Challenge is “Read to the Moon.” We started compiling and logging hours in May, officially launching at the summer Knox County Public Library’s Children’s Festival of Reading with the help of Knox County Schools, Great Schools Partnership and many other community groups.

Read City USA “landed” on the moon by hitting the 250,000-hour goal in late October. As of Nov. 19, an additional 27,536 hours have been logged for a total of 277,536 hours read already this year.

“Just because we reached our goal doesn’t mean we should stop reading. I want the community to keep reading and tracking through the end of the year to get ready for what’s coming next,” said Jacobs. “‘Read City USA Goes to the Moon’ started as an idea and was largely a grassroots campaign relying heavily on our Summer Library Clubs. After setting a baseline, we are moving into 2020 with a BIG plan.”

In 2020, Read City USA will fly around the world 20 times. Challenge 2020 effectively doubles our 2019 goal and asks the community to collectively read 500,000 hours between January and December of next year.

Challenge 2020 will have some of the same activities including Read Across America Day and the Summer Library Club. It will also introduce some new library programming and the first “Read City USA Student Ambassador Program” which boasts Ambassadors from many of our public, private and home schools. Aside from being tasked with promoting and encouraging Read City USA participation in their schools, these students will receive occasional challenges from the Mayor to spur reading and tracking.

Each school with an actively participating Ambassador representative signed up by Jan. 13, 2020, will be entered to win a drawing at the end of the spring semester for the opportunity to win one of two one-time \$2,020 grants. Another grant will be awarded at the end of the fall semester.

The grants were made possible by the following partners: The Allergy, Asthma and Sinus Center; Denark Construction; Friends of the Library; Hiatt Magical Vacations; Knox County Schools Partners in Education; Mobile Beats Entertainment; Outpatient Diagnostics; Stowers Cat; and Zack Ballinger.

Why Read City USA?

It is largely reported in this area that many of our third graders are not reading on grade level—a big problem because third grade is the academic year when students must know how to read to be able to learn. Worse, students who are unable to read at grade level in the third grade are more likely to stay behind throughout their academic careers, may never catch up to their classmates and have a higher rate of failing to complete high school at all.

This means Knox County will have fewer students ready to enter post-secondary education or trade schools. This translates to less students receiving advanced degrees or trade certifications and leaving Knox County without a ready workforce to attract new business to the community. Without consistently bettering our economic vitality, the skilled labor we do have may be more inclined to leave our community, perpetuating the cycle of being unable to attract new business.