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NEWS RELEASE

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Idaho Commission for Libraries Wins Grant to Pave “Routes to Reading”

Grant Connected to Local, National Efforts to Ensure More Children Read by Third Grade

BOISE, ID –The Idaho Commission for Libraries has received a \$250,000 grant to promote early learning among low-income children. The award is part of a \$2.5 million grant program that aligns the work of the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) with the goals of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

The Commission will partner with the J.A. & Kathryn Albertson Foundation and Idaho Kids Count on a program titled, “Routes to Reading: Idaho Paves the Way with Access to Print.” The project is designed to significantly increase the number of books shared with young children. “Books to Go” kits will be made available over the next three years at 250 Head Start centers, preschools, childcare centers, and home-based childcare sites statewide—allowing parents to take home bags of books to read with their children on a regular basis. The project team also will create a web-based “Virtual Storytime” to reach families who do not attend storytime at the library. This parent-friendly website will also contain electronic children’s books, daily activities to develop early literacy skills, and other educational information, and will be accessible statewide through public library websites.

“Many Idaho children enter kindergarten unprepared,” said Commission Reading Programs Coordinator Stephanie Bailey-White. “Research clearly shows the amount of reading done in the home is crucial to developing good readers. A lack of reading materials in the home contributes to the gap between good and poor readers that tends to increase as children enter school and progress through the grades.” The Commission’s work through the successful [Read to Me First Book](#) program shows that providing families with free, age-appropriate books and easy-to-understand information on activities they can do related to those books builds literacy skills and changes the behavior of parents. “We are very excited about this opportunity to provide increased access to early literacy materials and programs and reach more Idaho parents and caregivers with information about how they can prepare children to be successful in school,” said State Librarian Ann Joslin.

Aligning IMLS grants with the goals of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading makes it possible for libraries and museums to stand together with the cities, counties, and states, including Idaho, that have developed plans to improve early literacy. “I am delighted at the response to this effort,” said IMLS director Susan H. Hildreth. “The projects we are supporting are as diverse as the communities we will be



reaching. They involve a wide range of partners from schools and Head Start to United Way and Boys and Girls Clubs and demonstrate the power of libraries and museums as community anchors that can help us reach children early and be a consistent presence throughout the school years and beyond.”

A total of \$2.5 million has been awarded to museums and libraries in 19 communities across the United States. Many of the awards involve partnerships at the local, state and national levels and will engage museums, libraries and community organizations in coordinated efforts to act on the latest research and provide opportunities for young children and their parents and caregivers that really make a difference. “We need to reach these children before they enter kindergarten, and we need to keep them learning through the summer,” said Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and a senior vice president at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Museums and libraries are key partners for our communities.”

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The Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICFL) assists libraries to build the capacity to better serve their clientele. To learn more about ICFL, visit <http://libraries.idaho.gov/>.

The mission of the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](#) (IMLS) is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. IMLS provides leadership through research, policy development, and grant making, and supports key issues of national concern. Idaho’s “Routes to Reading” project is part of an [IMLS initiative](#) to support the goals of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and was among those receiving the [National Leadership Grants \(NLG\) announced by IMLS last week](#).

The [Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#), launched in early 2011, is a collaboration among foundations, national nonprofits, state and communities across the nation to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship.