



## REACH OUT AND READ CONNECTICUT

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Liberty Bank Foundation and Bob's Discount Furniture Reads Aloud to Young Children at Pediatric Care Center in Bristol in Support of Reach Out and Read School Readiness Program**

Bristol, CT (January 13, 2015) – Thanks to the generous funding from the Liberty Bank Foundation, and the work of the Bristol Early Childhood Alliance, pediatricians at Pediatric Care Center in Bristol, CT are sending families home from checkups with free books and a very important prescription – “read aloud to your children.” Today, Liberty Bank President and CEO, Chandler Howard, and Executive Director of Liberty Bank Foundation, Sue Murphy, visited the pediatric practice, not only to cheer them on, but to practice what doctors preach by reading to a group of young patients.

“To us, a grant is an investment—and with any investment, the goal is to maximize the return. Reach Out and Read’s proven programming does exactly that by involving children in reading right from birth. It’s an investment that pays off, not only in the early years by promoting brain development, but over an entire lifetime of learning. That’s what we bankers call ‘bang for the buck!’” -- *Chandler Howard, president and CEO of Liberty Bank and the Liberty Bank Foundation*

Pediatric Care Center is also the recipient of a brand new bookcase generously donated by Bob’s Discount Furniture and Bob’s Charitable Foundation. Cathy Poulin, Public Relations/Outreach Director, Bob’s Discount Furniture, attended today’s event as well. “We’re honored to be able to help support the Reach Out and Read program,” said Cathy. “Reading plays such an important role in children’s lives. It sets the foundation for success in both school and in life by opening new worlds for them to discover and explore, and helping to shape writing, language and other essential skills.”

Pediatric Care Center participates in Reach Out and Read, a program that prepares America’s youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together.

“The Bristol Early Childhood Alliance and Dr. Adeyinka are thrilled to see this program become part of the prescription for good health for the children of Bristol. Early learning is not just a school system issue. Implementing early literacy programs is imperative in helping parents create a healthy practice of daily reading and introducing children to an essential habit that will ensure future success. A key indicator that a child has a strong base to lead a successful life can be measured by their third grade reading ability. This program offers a unique opportunity to provide our youngest learners a jump start on their education. Having Reach Out and Read in our community adds one more building block to the foundation needed by making Bristol better for our children.” -- *Jessica Dunn, Co-Chair of BECA and Resident Service Coordinator for the Bristol Housing Authority*

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Doctors, nurse practitioners, and other medical professionals incorporate Reach Out and Read's evidence-based model into regular pediatric checkups, by advising parents about the importance of reading aloud and giving developmentally-appropriate books to children.

"I emphasize to parents that reading at a young age is critical to developing speech and communication skills, and that reading together creates stronger bonds between parents and their children. Most of the time it is the mother who is here with the child for the visit and in many cases they are already reading together. I especially encourage the fathers to read to their children as a way of forging a solid father-child relationship. "--*Cathy Mieczkowski APRN, PNP-BC, Pediatric Care Center*

Through Reach Out and Read, each child starts kindergarten with a home library of approximately 10 books and a parent who has heard at every well-child visit about the importance of books and reading. The program begins at the 6-month checkup and continues through age 5, with a special emphasis on children growing up in low-income families.

Pediatric Care Center is one of 71 programs in the state that participate in Reach Out and Read, and they provide the Reach Out and Read model to 300 children and families each year. Nearly 40,000 children and families receive the Reach Out and Read model in Connecticut. Families served by Reach Out and Read read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills, better prepared to achieve their full potential.

"Research shows that if you intervene in the first five years of life and partner with parents, you can dramatically improve the early literacy skills of a child, putting them on the track for success in school and in life," said Reach Out and Read Connecticut Executive Director Christine Garber. "Childhood development experts tell us that the most important thing that parents can do to prepare their children to succeed in school is to read aloud to them every day. "

The Reach Out and Read model is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the program has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. In 2014, Reach Out and Read joined with partners Too Small to Fail, the American Academy of Pediatrics and Scholastic to announce a new commitment to literacy promotion at the Clinton Global Initiative America meeting. Reach Out and Read is also the 2013 Winner of [The Library of Congress David M. Rubenstein Prize](#) for their groundbreaking work advancing literacy.

Nationally, Reach Out and Read doctors and nurses distribute over 6.5 million books to more than 4 million children and their families annually at 5,000 pediatric practices, hospitals, clinics and health centers in all 50 states. More than 20,000 medical providers nationwide currently participate in Reach Out and Read.

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Since its inception in 1997, the Liberty Bank Foundation has awarded over \$8.7 million in grants to nonprofit organizations within Liberty Bank's market area. The foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for people of low or moderate income by investing in three areas: education to promote economic success for children and families; affordable housing; and nonprofit capacity building. Along with its grantmaking, the foundation strives to foster the convening and collaboration of nonprofits, funders, business, and government to address community issues.

*For more information, visit [www.reachoutandreadct.org](http://www.reachoutandreadct.org), [www.facebook.com/reachoutandreadct](https://www.facebook.com/reachoutandreadct), [www.twitter.com/reachoutreadct](https://www.twitter.com/reachoutreadct)*

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