

June 19, 2017

**Volunteers to Read with Area Children On Wednesday June 21 – United Way's "Day of Action"
Events Focus on Reducing the "Summer Slide" in Literacy**

Many of us remember the joy that came with the last day of school – we couldn't wait to leave the books behind and get outside to play.

But *now* we know how important it is for kids to keep reading books over the summer; children from low-income families who don't own many books lose two to three months in reading skills each summer. By fifth grade, their summer learning loss can put them two to three years behind their classmates. This contributes to a startling reality: if a child doesn't read proficiently by the end of third grade, he or she is four times more likely than her classmates to drop out of school someday.

United Way of the Midlands and a team of community volunteers are working to reduce the "summer slide" in literacy skills. On Wednesday June 21, dozens of volunteers from across the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area will open up books and read with local kids on United Way's annual "Day of Action".

For two hours on that day, people from all walks of life will sit down and read with children who attend summer programs at a number of nonprofit program sites. Each child will also receive a "literacy kit" that contains books and activities they can take home at the end of the day. They'll also receive reading tips for their parents/guardians, as well as information on summer reading programs and activities offered by the Omaha and Council Bluffs Public Libraries. Employees of Sojern raised money to purchase the books, then assembled and decorated the kits in May. Oriental Trading Company also donated items for the literacy kits.

With 100 more children signed up than last year, the need for volunteers has grown. Interested individuals and groups are invited to register through noon June 20th through the online site: www.unitedwaymidlands.org/dayofaction. The site shows the number of volunteers needed at each location so individuals and teams can choose a time that fits their schedules. (To formally register, people can click the red "Sign Up" button at the top-right corner of the web page.)

MEDIA COVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES ON DAY OF ACTION – JUNE 21:

- 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Girl Scouts of Nebraska - 2121 S. 44th St. Omaha
- 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. North Omaha Boys and Girls Club - 2610 Hamilton St. Omaha
- 1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Girls, Inc. - 2811 N. 45th St. Omaha

About the United Way of the Midlands

Thanks to donors, volunteers and community partners, United Way of the Midlands is not only focused on addressing our community's human needs today; it is focused on what can be, and what should be. It is building on today's strong partnerships to create even more comprehensive human service efforts tomorrow, so our community can solve some of the root causes of poverty. United Way is community-based, community-focused. Thanks to those who share their strength, United Way is COMMUNITY STRONG. We invite you to visit www.UnitedWayMidlands.org for more information.