

UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS CONTACTS:

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**United Way of the Midlands Hosts the 3rd Annual *Day of Action* on June 21
Volunteers Act as “Reading Buddies” for Local Children to Encourage Summer Learning**

When the school year ends, children in high-poverty environments struggle, not only with basic needs like healthy food and safe places to spend their days, but also with losing precious time during the summer months to continue their learning. Children often experience summer learning loss, or “summer slide,” because they may not have age-appropriate books at home and access to out-of-school learning programs.

On Thursday, June 21, more than 300 volunteers are partnering with United Way of the Midlands (UWM) during the 3rd annual *Day of Action* to reinforce the importance of summer reading with 500 children in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area.

Day of Action is a volunteer service day focused on childhood literacy. Volunteer teams and individuals will act as “reading buddies” for children at six of UWM’s partner agencies. Each child will receive a literacy kit, provided by Sojern Gives Back, which includes three books per child, reading activities and information about summer reading programs. Sojern employees donated some of their favorite children’s books to include in the kits, and LEO A DALY generously sponsored items, including bookmarks and a summer reading log for children to track their reading progress throughout the summer.

Additionally this year, Nebraska Medicine is partnering with UWM on *Day of Action* to read books to children from Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands. The children will be representing three sites, including the North Omaha Club, South Omaha Club and Westside Club. Nebraska Medicine pediatric patients will also join in the fun. Most of the patients are receiving treatment for cancer, organ transplants and intestinal rehabilitation. Nebraska Medicine CEO Dan DeBehnke, MD, MBA, and United Way of the Midlands CEO Shawna Forsberg will gather on the Pediatrics Unit to read books with the patients.

In the 2016-17 academic year, more than 5,500 third grade students in the metro area were not reading at grade level. If a child does not read at grade level by the end of third grade, he or she is four times more likely to drop out of high school – and six times more likely if the child lives in poverty for a year. Through *Day of Action*, UWM is bringing awareness to the issue of summer learning loss and kick-starting a summer of reading to help students stay on track for next year’s school learning.

*With respect for the privacy of some children participating in tomorrow’s activities, there will be a select group of students available for video coverage at the *Day of Action* sites listed below, as well as interview opportunities with some children and volunteers:

9:30 a.m. – Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands at Nebraska Medicine, 4350 Dewey Avenue

Media should meet inside the lobby of Clarkson Tower. Park along the curb, in front of the hand statue.
UWM representative: Shawna Forsberg, President and CEO

1 p.m. to 3 p.m. – Urban League of Nebraska at King Elementary, 3706 Maple Street

UWM representative: Danielle Ohlman, Director of Volunteer Engagement

1 p.m. to 3 p.m. – Completely Kids at All Saints Elementary, 1335 S 10th Street

UWM representative: Brayton Hagge, Donor Engagement

About 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 UnitedWayMidlands.org for more information.