

UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS CONTACTS:

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Volunteers Act as “Reading Buddies” for Local Children on United Way’s Day of Action

On Friday, June 21, more than 400 volunteers are partnering with United Way of the Midlands (UWM) during the 4th annual *Day of Action*, a community-wide volunteer service day.

Volunteers will act as “reading buddies” for approximately 500 children from across the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area. Each child will receive a literacy kit, which includes three books, reading activities and information about summer reading programs. The kits were generously donated and assembled by Sojern.

When kids are not engaged in quality summer programming or do not have access to books to read in the home, they can experience “summer slide,” a loss of literacy skills over the summer. This can have big impacts on students’ future success; if children are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade, they are four times more likely to drop out of high school – and six times more likely if they are living in poverty. Through *Day of Action*, UWM volunteers are helping to inspire a love of reading, prevent summer learning loss and ensure kids are on track to succeed next year.

Six of UWM’s partner agencies are participating. In addition, two corporate locations, Nebraska Medicine and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBS), will host children on-site.

In the morning, BCBS employees will read to children enrolled in the Girl Scouts of NE – My Summer Place program. Nebraska Medicine employees will read to children from the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands’ North Omaha, South Omaha and Westside locations during the morning and children from the Mount View and Carter Lake locations in the afternoon. Nebraska Medicine pediatric patients will also join in the fun. Most of the patients are receiving treatment for cancer, organ transplants and intestinal rehabilitation. Cory Shaw, Nebraska Medicine’s EVP chief operating officer, and United Way of the Midlands’ president and CEO Shawna Forsberg will gather on the Pediatrics Unit to read books with the patients.

*Media are invited to visit the *Day of Action* sites listed below. For more information, please see tomorrow’s media alert.

9 – 11 a.m. – **Kids Can! Community Center**, 4860 Q Street

9 – 11 a.m. – Girl Scouts of NE – My Summer Place at **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska**, 1919 Aksarben Drive

1:30 – 2 p.m. – Boys and Girls Clubs of the Midlands at **Nebraska Medicine**, 4350 Dewey Avenue

1 – 3 p.m. – Urban League of Nebraska at **Franklin Elementary**, 3506 Franklin Street

Pre-Party for Day of Action: 3rd Annual ROCK OUT TO READ benefit concert tonight at The Waiting Room Lounge

Hosted by the United Way of the Midlands’ Emerging Leaders, this year’s Rock Out to Read will feature local bands Salt Creek, Field Club and Glen Hollow with Omaha city councilmember Pete Festersen on drums. Core Bank is serving as the concert’s lead sponsor, with Black Hills Energy and Gavilon also serving as sponsors.

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Rock Out to Read will begin at 8 p.m. tonight. Tickets are available at the door or The Waiting Room's website for \$15.

100% of the ticket proceeds will support Book Trust, a national literacy program funded by United Way of the Midlands donors. Through this program, kids in ten local Title 1 schools receive Scholastic books of their choosing each month and are able to build their at-home libraries. Since 2016, students have taken home more than 135,000 books provided through the program.

About United Way of the Midlands

United Way of the Midlands (UWM) has served the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro for more than 95 years. Guided by best practices and community input, it approaches poverty in a specific way – a “united” way. With the support of volunteers, community partners and donors, UWM invests 92 cents of every donated dollar in our local community. These dollars fund 110 nonprofit programs that create a circle of support for people in need. When our neighbors have access to basic needs, education and financial stability supports, they can start down a path to independence and success. Please visit unitedwaymidlands.org for more information.

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