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SMART Reading Announces New Executive Director

Portland, Ore. – The Board of Directors of SMART Reading, the statewide children’s literacy nonprofit, has named Jessica Bowersox the organization’s next executive director. Bowersox will assume her new role on July 1, 2022 upon the retirement of 11-year Executive Director Chris Otis.

“In a crowded field of talented candidates, Jessica was the standout choice,” said Anna Madill, SMART Reading Board Chair. “With more than 11 years of experience on SMART’s Executive Leadership Team as the Communications Director and more recently, Deputy Director, she understands SMART’s work, knows the teams, and is deeply committed to our mission. In short, Jessica is the leader we need to take SMART through its next chapters.”

Bowersox has 17 years’ experience in public relations and integrated marketing communications within communications agencies and the nonprofit sector. As Communications Director of SMART Reading, she provided marketing and public relations expertise to drive the organization’s communications strategies throughout Oregon. She also played an integral role in setting strategic vision for SMART as a member of the Executive Leadership Team and working with staff and board leadership to fulfill that vision. She holds Bachelor’s degrees in Public Relations and Magazine Journalism from the University of Oregon’s School of Journalism and Communication, and a Master’s in Business Administration from Willamette University.

“I couldn’t feel more confident that I’m leaving SMART Reading in capable hands,” said outgoing Executive Director Chris Otis. “Jessica has the skills, experience, and vision to lead and expand SMART’s impact across Oregon in a moment when our work to help students become strong, confident readers is more critical than ever.”

When Bowersox assumes the executive director role on July 1, 2022, she’ll be overseeing SMART’s operations in 26 of Oregon’s 36 counties as well as an influential merger with Portland-based nonprofit The Children’s Book Bank, which is expected to expand the organization’s reach and positively impact literacy outcomes.

About SMART Reading

SMART Reading is a statewide children's literacy nonprofit that serves kids in Oregon's highest need schools with two ingredients critical for literacy and learning success: one-on-one reading time and access to books. We mobilize volunteers to read with PreK through third-grade children, building confidence, literacy skills and a love of reading. Since 1992, we have paired over 146,000 volunteers to read with 250,000 children, and have put 3 million books in the homes of the children we serve. Visit www.SMARTReading.org or call 877-598-4633 to learn more.

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