



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 1, 2022

**Media Contact:**

Phoebe Petersen

Communications Director, SMART Reading

971-634-1625, [ppetersen@smartreading.org](mailto:ppetersen@smartreading.org)

## **Oregon Kids to Benefit from Merger of Established Literacy Nonprofits**

**Portland, Ore.** -- After over a year of exploration and due diligence, the Boards of Directors of SMART Reading and The Children's Book Bank have finalized a merger between the two organizations, effective July 1, 2022.

The merger provides exciting opportunities for both organizations. For The Children's Book Bank, it offers the opportunity to expand scope and scale outside of the Portland Metro area by utilizing SMART Reading's statewide infrastructure. For SMART Reading, the merger extends the organization's mission by getting more books into kids' hands, supporting early literacy development for students, and expanding and diversifying volunteer opportunities.

"SMART Reading and The Children's Book Bank are merging because our collective whole is greater than the sum of our parts," said Jessica Bowersox, Executive Director of SMART Reading. "By coming together intentionally as one organization, we are poised to better serve Oregon kids with reading support and access to books -- two of the strongest predictors of early literacy skills."

"When I started The Children's Book Bank, my guiding wish was to fill children's homes with as many books as possible, knowing they're powerful tools of learning and affirmation," said Dani Swope, founder and former Executive Director of The Children's Book Bank. "This merger allows The Children's Book Bank to expand that impact by tapping into SMART Reading's statewide infrastructure, and I'm thrilled about what this next phase holds for both organizations."

(more)

“Childhood literacy has long been an investment priority for Oregon Community Foundation, and we have worked with both SMART and The Children’s Book Bank for many years. The merger of two outstanding literacy-focused nonprofits is great news for Oregon children and families,” said Max Williams, President and CEO of Oregon Community Foundation. “This merger will leverage the strengths and resources of both organizations to expand their reach and impact.”

Effective July 1, the merged organization will operate under the name SMART Reading. In the 2022-23 school year, programming will operate as usual while the merged Boards of Directors and staff explore opportunities to expand the work of the Book Bank into the greater Metro area and across Oregon. Programmatic changes are planned for the 2023-24 school year.

### **About SMART Reading**

Since 1992, SMART Reading has engaged over 146,000 Oregonians to support 252,284 Oregon children with individual reading support and over 3 million books to keep, ensuring that they can start -- and stay-- on a path of strong literacy development that leads to lifelong benefits and opportunities. To learn more, visit [www.SMARTReading.org](http://www.SMARTReading.org).

### **About The Children’s Book Bank**

Since 2008, The Children’s Book Bank has mobilized the Portland community to give over 1 million high-quality books to 106,377 children, engaging thousands of volunteers each year to thoughtfully receive, clean, restore, sort, bundle, and deliver community-donated books to families that need them. By filling entire classrooms, programs, and neighborhoods with quality and inclusive books, the Book Bank strives to create a community where all children have equal opportunity to succeed as future readers and learners. To learn more, visit [www.childrensbookbank.org](http://www.childrensbookbank.org).

### **About Oregon Community Foundation**

Oregon Community Foundation puts donated money to work in Oregon—more than \$100 million in grants and scholarships annually. Since 1973, OCF grantmaking, research, advocacy and community-advised solutions have helped individuals, families, businesses, and organizations create charitable funds to improve lives for all Oregonians. Impactful giving—time, talent, and resources from many generous Oregonians—creates measurable change. Throughout 2020, OCF responded quickly and urgently, distributing a record-setting \$220 million in charitable dollars to more than 3,000 nonprofits throughout Oregon working to address urgent needs, stabilize communities and prepare for long-term recovery in Oregon. OCF donors responded to the magnitude of need, as reflected in a 44% increase in donor advised fund grantmaking from the previous year. For more information, visit: [oregoncf.org](http://oregoncf.org).

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