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**Media Contact:**

Jessica Bowersox  
Deputy Director, SMART Reading  
541-513-2484, [jbowersox@smartreading.org](mailto:jbowersox@smartreading.org)

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

**Portland, Ore.** -- After nearly a year of exploration and due diligence, the Boards of Directors of SMART Reading and The Children's Book Bank have announced an intent to merge the two organizations, effective in 2022.

For The Children's Book Bank, the merger will 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 Chris Otis, Executive Director of SMART Reading. "By coming together intentionally as one organization, we'll be 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 will allow 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.”

For the remainder of 2021, both organizations will continue delivering on their respective missions separately. The process of combining legally and administratively will begin in early 2022, with programmatic changes 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 993,678 beautiful books to 95,295 children experiencing poverty and children of color facing institutional barriers throughout Multnomah County. In order to re-purpose more than 100,000 new and gently-used children’s books each year, CBB typically engages ~3,500 volunteers to thoughtfully receive, clean, restore, sort, bundle and deliver community-donated books to 8,500 families that need them. We partner with early childhood organizations and Title One elementary schools to reach young children and students who can benefit from free, age-appropriate collections of quality, inclusive books to keep as their own. 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, please visit: [oregoncf.org](http://oregoncf.org).

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