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## **HOUSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY, BARBARA BUSH HOUSTON LITERACY FOUNDATION AND HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY PROMOTE FAMILY LITERACY AT AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMUNITIES**

**HOUSTON**— The Houston Housing Authority in collaboration with the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation (BBHLF) and the Houston Public Library (HPL) will host family literacy festivals at six of its affordable housing communities as part of its plan to promote summer reading and childhood and adult literacy among its residents. An average of 100 families are expected to attend each event scheduled throughout the month of June. Since it announced its initiative to promote family literacy in 2012, the Housing Authority has created and expanded six libraries at its properties, distributed more than 13,000 books to residents and hosted annual adult literacy classes, summer reading programs and after-school reading programs.

“We are proud to partner with the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and Houston Public Library for this great summer project that not only promotes literacy but also brings families together,” said Houston Housing Authority President & CEO Tory Gunsolley. “We are committed to providing our residents with the tools that they need to become self-sufficient and reading is a fundamental aspect of being financially independent.”

The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation donated more than 6,000 gently used books, journals, T-shirts and parent information through its partnerships with local Girl Scout member Danielle Perugini, Half-Price Books, Houston Public Media and Alcotra North America. The BBHLF staff and volunteers were on hand at each event to distribute the resources and encourage attendees to sign the Houston’s Literacy Promise pledge, a campaign that asks Houstonians to support the mission to end Houston’s literacy crisis.

“The family literacy festivals are a great way to talk with parents about the importance of summer reading and writing and to provide families with books and other resources that they can read and use at home,” said Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation President Julie Baker Finck. “Research shows that low-income children can lose as many as two months in reading achievement during the summer. This summer learning loss can be mitigated by reading at least 15 minutes per day.”

The Houston Public Library offered residents at each event the opportunity to participate in its Pop Up Library sessions. For about 25 minutes, the Pop Up team read a book aloud then led

an interactive activity followed by an iPad activity with the children. Each child received a backpack filled with free items, which included a free book, an activity sheet, and passes to the Children's Museum of Houston at the end of the session. Residents were also given the opportunity to register for a library card, enroll in HPL's Summer Reading Program and receive more information about various programs and classes offered through the Houston Public Library. The Library also donated 500 books.

"We are pleased to join forces with the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and the Houston Housing Authority to bring vital literacy activities and programs to Houston's families during the summer months," said Dr. Rhea Brown Lawson, Director of the Houston Public Library. "Our Pop Up Library program is designed to promote intergenerational literacy, to provide activities that encourage children to maintain or increase their reading levels during summer, and to involve families in summer reading programs. We are grateful to our program partner, the Children's Museum of Houston, and to our program sponsors, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, for helping to make this very successful program a reality."

#### **ABOUT HHA:**

The Houston Housing Authority provides affordable homes and services to more than 58,000 low-income Houstonians, including over 17,000 families housed through the Housing Choice Voucher Program and another 13,000 living in 25 public housing and tax credit developments around the city. HHA also administers the nation's third largest voucher program exclusively serving homeless veterans. More information about the Houston Housing Authority can be found at [www.housingforhouston.com](http://www.housingforhouston.com).

#### **ABOUT BBHLF:**

The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, co-chaired by Neil and Maria Bush, was established as a charitable organization focused on improving the quality of life for Houston residents through the power of literacy. The Foundation advocates for literacy as a fundamental right of everyone and a foundational skill towards success in life. It is founded on the belief held by Barbara Bush, former First Lady, "If you help a person to read, then their opportunities in life will be endless." In 2013, The Bush Family created the Houston-based foundation separate from the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, a national foundation, in response to the need to deepen the awareness of and intensify services and support for the nation's fourth largest and most diverse city – Houston.

#### **ABOUT HPL:**

The Houston Public Library (HPL) operates 35 neighborhood libraries, four HPL Express Libraries, a Central Library, the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, The African American Library at the Gregory School, and the Parent Resource Library located in the Children's Museum of Houston. Serving more than seven million customers per year in person and online, HPL is committed to excellent customer service and equitable access to information and programs by providing library customers with free use of a diverse collection of printed materials and electronic resources, Internet, laptop and computer use, and a variety of database and reference resources with live assistance online 24/7. For further information, visit the Houston Public Library at [www.houstonlibrary.org](http://www.houstonlibrary.org) or call 832-393-1313.

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