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SCBWI's Third Annual Literacy Initiative **Gives Books, Builds Dreams,** and **Offers Hope** to Readers In Need

Children's Book Creators Join Forces to Provide High Quality Books Plus a Literary Celebration for the **MADISON READING PROJECT**

Los Angeles, September 13, 2019

The members of the [Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators](#) join forces once again as part of the organization's 3rd Annual SCBWI Books For Readers book drive and literacy event to collect, curate, and donate new books created by its members to one of its two 2019 recipients: the **Madison Reading Project** in Madison, WI. (The other is **REACH** in Portsmouth, VA.)

The **SCBWI Books for Readers** literacy initiative grew from the organization's desire to create an opportunity for its members to make an important impact in the lives of readers, to increase book access to local communities nationwide and internationally, to expand its literacy advocacy, and to support the work of the many grass roots organizations working to improve literacy.

"We know that there are many book deserts in which underserved communities have as few as 1 book per 300 children. Our hope is to change these numbers and make high quality books available to all children," said **Lin Oliver, Executive Director of SCBWI**. "Our talented members create books of hope, and they're committed to bringing this hope to readers--especially to those in great need. Our SCBWI BFR literacy initiative continues to advance our organization's mission as children's book creators and literacy advocates to build hopes and dreams!"

As a result of this initiative, a donation of nearly one thousand of SCBWI members' books will be heading to the **Madison Reading Project** serving readers in need in the greater Madison area.

Started by Rowan Childs, founder/director of the Madison Reading Project, a voracious reader since birth, lover of all things literacy, and mother of a former reluctant reader, the Madison Reading Project's mission is to deliver high-quality literacy learning reinforcement programs to underserved children, to engage them in differentiated literacy activities designed to reinforce age-appropriate skills necessary to become successful readers, and to help foster a love of reading and learning.

The seed for the MRP grew from Childs' desire to share her love of books and reading with her young son. While researching fun ways to integrate reading and literacy activities into their daily life, she wondered about readers in her area lacking exposure to these things, and their access to books.

That's when Childs started a pilot program for after-school programs at the Salvation Army Community Center in Madison with opportunities for kids to read, to practice their reading skills, and to have fun. These were the same kids she asked about their reading processes, struggles, and their favorite books. With their input, Childs started buying books that matched their needs and interests, reached out to others for book donations, funds, and volunteers, and quickly discovered what she calls "book angels" who generously donated brand-new books, gave her money to purchase others, and volunteered their time to hold book drives, sort book donations, and help distribute books. From this first year, the nonprofit, Madison Reading Project was born!

Since 2013, Madison Reading Project has provided a variety of literacy rich experiences to schools, child and family welfare agencies, community centers, food pantries, libraries, neighborhood spaces, and festivals, among others. These offerings include one-off and on-going literacy programming, small library curation, interactive story times, arts & crafts, MRP's Book of the Month Club, and most popular--MRP's free book giveaways where readers can choose books that fill their needs, match their interests, build their home libraries. In 2019, they added THE BIG RED READING BUS to help the organization "bring their giving library and programming to kids and meet them in their neighborhoods"

So, of course, Childs knows the right place that SCBWI's donation will go, and what it will mean to the kids and families MRP serves. But, she still cannot believe their good fortune to be chosen as one of two recipients from over 300 nominations to receive the books, and this honor.

"When I got the call, I couldn't believe that SCBWI was recognizing our small organization in the middle of Wisconsin. Everyone is thrilled and honored to be part of the recognition, staff, the board, the volunteers, and soon the

kids!” Childs said. “It’s a tribute to what we are doing--and to the kids we serve. We are *wowed* that the authors and illustrators who created these books are supporting what we are doing, and helping get their books into these kids’ hands. It’s also an intrinsic pat on the back--a belief in what we are doing to increase literacy rates, and will encourage all of us to do more!”

There’s also more to this story. The carefully curated library of books will be officially donated at the SCBWI BFR/MRP Literacy Celebration on Thursday, October 10, 2019, from 5:30-8 p.m. at the Madison Masonic Center. The evening’s events will include a literacy line-up of local SCBWI authors and illustrators, as well as five celebration stations including: interactive story times, art demonstrations, book-plate making, photo memory sharing, and refreshments. But, the high point will most definitely be the moment when all children in attendance receive a book of their own created by SCBWI authors and illustrators.

“I know that our children will be thrilled to receive books from the actual authors and illustrators who created them,” Childs says. “Kids love a party, but this will be a special one they will remember for a long time. A party where they can meet real live authors and illustrators, enjoy literacy stations--and of course, take home a free book of their choosing--that's what Madison Reading Project is all about!”

Oliver and SCBWI couldn’t be happier or more excited to partner with MRP, too.

"This organization was chosen from hundreds of nominated organizations because of the good work they are doing at a grass roots level. It’s time that worthy organizations supported by dedicated volunteers, receive the recognition and support they deserve. It is these people, lending their helping hands and hearts, that bring hope to our children and our country.”

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About Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators

[Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators](#) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization, which is one of the largest existing organizations for writers and illustrators. It is the only professional organization specifically for those individuals writing and illustrating for children and young adults in the fields of children's literature, magazines, film, television and multimedia. The SCBWI acts as a network for the exchange of knowledge between writers, illustrators, editors, publishers, agents, librarians, educators, booksellers and others involved with literature for young people.

About the Madison Reading Project

Madison Reading Project mission is to deliver high quality literacy learning reinforcement programs to underserved children that engage them in differentiated literacy activities designed to build and/or reinforce age-appropriate skills necessary for successful readers, and to help foster a love of reading. A key to its mission is to involve the entire family in literacy activities and programs, and to offer free multilingual companions books to encourage children, parents/caregivers, and siblings to build family libraries they enjoy together. In other words, MRP believes families who read together, succeed together! For more information, visit its website: <https://www.madisonreadingproject.com>

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