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BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER CHARLOTTE

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For Immediate Release

Charlotte Boys & Girls Clubs Launch New Program to Boost Literacy

Initiatives Begin to Improve Children's Reading Scores

CHARLOTTE, NC (February 11, 2011)—For 45 minutes each Friday at The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Charlotte, books become more important than basketballs; the sound of pages turning replaces the pop of ping-pong balls; and the shouts and laughter of children quiet to whispers. What could cause such a hush to fall over these normally boisterous Clubs? More than \$11,000 worth of books—and a weekly campaign called “Drop Everything and Read.”

First Book donated two books for each of the Clubs' 2,100 children so that they can begin to build personal libraries—and catch a reading bug. The Clubs seek to model to children the sheer joy of reading a good book as they work to raise reading levels among impoverished youth. According the U.S. Department of Education, roughly 70 percent of elementary school children in low-income urban families read below grade level. Children who have greater access to print materials test higher in reading.

In March the Clubs will also launch Reading Buddies, a volunteer-based program that focuses on literacy with individual children as well as group book discussions. According to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PISA), finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change and that being a more enthusiastic and frequent reader was more of an advantage than having well-educated parents in good jobs. This is encouraging news for children of low-income parents with limited education.

“Daily our Clubs are making positive changes for children in the community,” said Marty Clary, director of the Boys & Girls Clubs. “Together, by working with schools, corporations, and volunteers, we can address the problem illiteracy holds for our children, making them more successful in their education and in their future.”

The Clubs' focus on literacy also incorporates a grant from Ross Stores to enrich its Power Hour homework helps program. In addition to the Drop Everything and Read program every Friday, children are encouraged daily to arrive at the come and tackle the task of homework or studying.

“We are anticipating excellent results from these literacy initiatives,” said Dana Carpenter, Boys & Girls Clubs director of operations. “We are thankful for our all of our partners and volunteers who are helping to better the lives of these deserving children.”

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About the Boys & Girls Clubs

The Boys & Girls Clubs was founded locally in 1935 on North Poplar Street. Today 7 clubs serve 2,100 school-age children. Programs include academics, recreation, the arts, character and leadership, and health and life skills. The clubs are located in diverse neighborhoods from Charlotte Housing Authority sites, to Davidson, to the nation's only club in a homeless shelter. The Boys & Girls Clubs is a division of The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte.