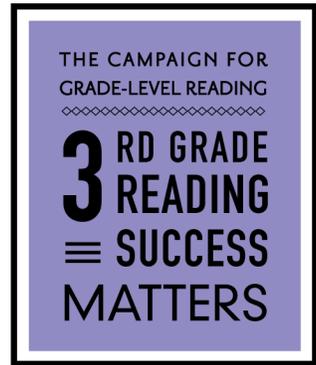


# NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **CAMPAIGN FOR GRADE-LEVEL READING LIFTS UP 14 PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES FOR EXEMPLARY WORK TO TRANSFORM THEIR COMMUNITIES INTO BOOK-RICH ENVIRONMENTS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. January 11, 2017 – The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is lifting up 14 public housing agencies (PHAs) as bright spots for their exemplary work to transform their communities into book-rich environments.

This announcement follows the recent launch of the Book-Rich Environments Initiative, a collaborative effort spearheaded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Education to establish strong, local coalitions that support PHAs nationwide with providing diverse, high-quality books and literacy support to children and families living in public and HUD-assisted housing.

Today, more than one million children from birth to age 8 are living in public housing in the United States. Research shows that 80 percent of children from low-income families enter kindergarten so far behind that they do not catch up and are unable to read proficiently by the end of third grade, a key predictor of high school graduation.

“The formal launch of the Book-Rich Environments Initiative demonstrates that the momentum for this work will continue to build through helping to deepen and expand efforts focused on solving this issue that are already in progress,” said Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. “These PHAs are bright spots doing what it takes to change the trajectory of children’s lives. We applaud them for taking up the challenge to increase reading proficiency and improve the overall academic achievement of children in low-income families.”

**Arizona**

- City of Chandler Housing and Redevelopment Division  
*Amy Jacobson, Housing & Redevelopment Manager*
- City of Phoenix Housing Department  
*Cindy Stotler, Director*

**California**

- Contra Costa County Housing Authority  
*Joseph Villarreal, Executive Director*
- Housing Authority of the County of San Joaquin  
*Peter Ragsdale, Executive Director*
- Marin County Housing Authority  
*Lewis Jordan, Executive Director*

**Florida**

- Sarasota Housing Authority  
*William Russell, Executive Director*
- Tampa Housing Authority  
*Jerome Ryans, President & Chief Executive Officer*

**Kansas**

- Topeka Housing Authority  
*Sophie George, President & Chief Executive Officer*

**Massachusetts**

- New Bedford Housing Authority  
*Steve Beauregard, Executive Director*

**Missouri**

- Kansas City Housing Authority  
*Edwin Lowndes, Executive Director*

**North Carolina**

- Durham Housing Authority  
*Anthony Scott, Chief Executive Officer*

**Texas**

- San Antonio Housing Authority  
*David Nisivoccia, President & Chief Executive Officer*

**Virginia**

- City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority  
*Glenda Edwards Goh, Executive Director*

**Washington**

- Tacoma Housing Authority  
*Michael Mirra, Executive Director*

**City of Chandler Housing and Redevelopment Division & City of Phoenix Housing Department** offered Raising A Reader (RAR), an early literacy and parent engagement program, to the families of the Chandler Public Housing community last fall for the first time. RAR also was offered to several public housing apartment communities in Phoenix. Through the program, families receive a rotation of RAR book bags filled with award-winning books to read and enjoy together.

**City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority's** Lansdowne Park public housing site benefits from a collaborative partnership between the Roanoke Police Department Reads, Total Action for Progress (TAP) and several public schools. Uniformed police officers read to children enrolled in TAP Head Start, creating a positive association with both uniformed officers and books.

**Contra Costa County Housing Authority** book distribution partners include REadingADvantage, which works with First Book and Imagination Library. The Contra Costa County HA has distributed books to children at the El Pueblo and DeAnza Gardens housing sites since June 2015. It also distributes books to new mothers during parent workshops and has co-hosted events at the Children's Library with Contra Costa County during wait-list lines and at other community events.

**Durham Housing Authority** has recently partnered with Book Harvest to provide new, free books to children and families. Its first book distribution, National Night Out, was held on August 2, working alongside police officers and resident leaders in each community.

**Housing Authority of the County of San Joaquin** has partnered with the University of the Pacific (a local GLR Campaign backbone organization) to give books to kids through its summer literacy program at housing sites. The San Joaquin County HA also partners with Reach Out and Read to provide books to residents.

**Kansas City Housing Authority** is getting books to families in one of its housing sites (Choteau Courts) through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. Turn the Page KC has also provided books to families in the "Phoenix Family" low-income housing communities through its partnership with First Book.

**Marin County Housing Authority** received a \$10,000 grant from the Super Bowl 50 Host Committee in the summer of 2015 to support its literacy and book distribution efforts. The Marin County HA provided San Francisco Bay Area families with two-year memberships to ABCmouse.com and distributed books to children from ONE BOOK.

**New Bedford Housing Authority** is partnering with WGBH in Boston on a book distribution program. The New Bedford GLR Campaign Community received a book grant of \$7,500 to purchase books for young children through Scholastic.

**San Antonio Housing Authority** opened the Dr. Ricardo Romo BiblioTech, the second branch of the BiblioTech Digital Library and the country's first digital library branch located in a public housing community. The library branch is part of the Gardens of San Juan Square public housing complex located in Bexar County, Texas. It offers residents easy access to computers, e-readers, and over 38,000 e-books. BiblioTech has partnered with 14 school districts and 58 schools to reach students and provide individualized e-readers adjusted to student's reading levels and goals. Through HUD's ConnectHome Wi-Fi program, students have 24/7 access to the digital book collection.

**Sarasota Housing Authority** holds an annual back-to-school event that includes backpacks containing books, with the costs covered by a \$3,000 grant from a local bank. The agency's summer enrichment camps, parent education and Head Start programs include book giveaways with donations from the Early Learning Coalition, police and individual donors. SHA also received books from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County for distribution to its families.

**Tacoma Housing Authority** provides summer learning programming that includes meals and distribution of books as part of its strategy to narrow the achievement gap. Public librarians and the local PBS affiliate KTBC provide literacy activities for primary grade students at summer lunch sites in the parks and at public housing sites.

**Tampa Housing Authority** has teamed up with Hillsborough County Public Schools and several local nonprofit organizations for Read on myON, a community-wide effort to encourage reading and increase literacy rates. The Read on myON project provides children from birth to grade 8 access to a personalized literacy environment with over 4,000 digital books. Partner organizations include the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative, United Way Suncoast, BOCC Head Start and the Early Learning Coalition.

**Topeka Housing Authority** works with United Way of Greater Topeka and other partners to distribute books at its family literacy event, Book Bingo, where participating families have the opportunity to take home multiple books to keep and build personal home libraries. Books were also distributed to kids at Summer Feeding Service Program sites including housing agency communities with books acquired through Scholastic and donated by businesses and through local book drives.

Visit [gradelevelreading.net/housingnews](http://gradelevelreading.net/housingnews) to learn more about the GLR Campaign's focus on housing.

### **About the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading**

Launched in May 2010, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is a collaborative effort of funders, nonprofit partners, business leaders, government agencies, states and communities across the nation to ensure that many more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career and active citizenship. Since its launch, the GLR Campaign has grown to include more than 285 communities, representing 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with 2,300 local organizations (including 130 United Ways and 250 state and local funders). To learn more, visit [gradelevelreading.net](http://gradelevelreading.net) and follow the movement on Twitter [@readingby3rd](https://twitter.com/readingby3rd).

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