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Literacy Bus to Begin Rolling through Hillsborough County

WEDU PBS Announces Partnership with Children's Board of Hillsborough County

Tampa, FL — WEDU PBS, The Children's Board of Hillsborough County, Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library and the Junior League of Tampa have partnered together to develop a Mobile Interactive Literacy Opportunity known as (MILO) - a mobile interactive literacy bus that will encourage family reading and lead to higher educational success for the Children of Hillsborough County.

Studies have shown that the presence of books in the home is one of the greatest influences on a child's academic success. However, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that nearly 25% of children in Hillsborough County live in poverty – which means that the children who need these books the most may not have regular access to them, and as a result may struggle on their path toward school readiness.

"Literacy is the foundation for success in life and this program will further validate our efforts to make sure children in Hillsborough County are ready to learn and succeed," said Kelley Parris, Executive Director of the Children's Board of Hillsborough County.

The MILO initiative will consist of monthly Saturday programs to be held at community locations (primarily public libraries and Children's Board Family Resource Centers) throughout Hillsborough County, targeting rural and urban neighborhoods that have been designated as at-risk or underserved. The program focuses on children ages three to eight years old and their caregivers. The events will be held the first Saturday of each month beginning May 7, 2016 in the Sulphur Springs community.

"WEDU has an extensive history of providing free educational services in the community not only on-air, but also online and through community outreach events. The MILO initiative is a great addition to our collection of services that also honors WEDU's mission of providing quality educational content that enriches lives. This is a great collaboration between partners that are dedicated to inspiring a love of reading and learning," said Susan Howarth, WEDU President and CEO.

Library staff will work with WEDU staff to offer engaging, interactive literacy stations that will encourage a love of reading in children and develop literacy skills that will help them reach educational success. The Junior League of Tampa will provide free books, and children will have the opportunity to select the titles they would like to take home and use to begin their home libraries. These events will also encourage families to get a free Hillsborough County public library card, so that community members can take advantage of the library's services.

"I couldn't be more impressed with the collaboration, dedication, and ideology of this mobile library. The partners in this project made it a reality I am very proud of. MILO is just one more example of how Hillsborough County values children, education, and community. We are providing more than literacy, we are providing hope in our community," said Commissioner Sandy Murman.

"To see our library system extend outside our brick and mortar structures is exhilarating. To know that we have the partners and the means to provide critical literacy opportunities across Hillsborough County makes me very proud today," said Andrew Bredienbaugh, Director Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library.

ABOUT WEDU PBS

WEDU is West Central Florida's leading PBS station reaching 16 counties through media platforms including on-air programming and online experiences that broaden horizons, transport and transform and open gateways to new ideas and new worlds. Financially supported by the community, the organization offers a wealth of award-winning inspirational, educational and enlightening content over a variety of multi-media platforms including: television programming, station website, www.wedu.org and various social media platforms, monthly member magazine *Premiere*, educational outreach activities and a myriad of special events. WEDU's focus on the local community has resulted in the station being regarded as a beacon of trust for men, women and children of every walk of life no matter their age, ethnicity or socio-economic status. WEDU is a treasured community resource; a window to the world for the homebound and a vital educational source for the youngest members of society. WEDU prides itself on its position in the Tampa Bay community as a leader, partner, informed citizen and a member of PBS, the most trusted institution in America (Source: Survey Sampling International (SSI), January 2016). For more information, program schedules or to support WEDU visit www.wedu.org; WEDU Public Media on Facebook and Twitter (@wedupbs) or call (813) 254-9338.

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