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Reach Out and Read-Alabama Launches Summer Campaign and Celebrates 10 Years of Stories

(TROY, Ala.) June 27, 2016 – Reach Out and Read-Alabama pediatric practices and clinics will celebrate 10 years of stories this summer with *How Do Dinosaurs Say Happy Birthday?*. In the last 10 years, our pediatric healthcare providers have prescribed **over 1.6 million** brand-new books to the state's youngest and most underserved children. This June, the early literacy program launches its seventh-annual summer campaign that promotes families reading together. Copies of the book will be distributed by pediatric healthcare providers statewide, who will also talk to parents about reading together daily as well as becoming involved in the summer reading program at their local library.

How Do Dinosaurs Say Happy Birthday? activities and events sponsored by Charles Henderson Child Health Center are being held at the practice on Wednesday, June 29 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Activities include Representative Alan Boothe of House District 89 reading the book to children in the waiting room, as well as fun dinosaur games like "Pin the Tail on the Dinosaur" and "Ring the Dinosaur". Children will also enjoy dinosaur-themed snacks and a dino dig. Teresa Colvin, children's activities director at the Troy Public Library, will once again be participating with the event, reading the book and encouraging families to visit the library this summer.

This year's book, *How Do Dinosaurs Say Happy Birthday?* by Jane Yolen and Mark Teague, is being used in conjunction with the Rx for Summer Reading campaign at local libraries. Thanks to Alabama Public Television's project funded by the Corporation of Public Broadcasting, American Graduate, the Birmingham Public Library has teamed up with Reach Out and Read-Alabama once again to provide Reach Out and Read-Alabama practices and clinics across the state with prescription pads, posters and books to promote summer reading.

"Prescribing a book during each check-up gives us the opportunity to connect with parents and create a partnership in the lifelong journey of learning for their child. What's even better is that new studies are documenting the effectiveness of the unexpectedly complex interactions that occur when you put a small child on your lap and open a picture book," said Rosemary Hanson, Reach Out and Read site coordinator of Charles Henderson Child Health Center.

The Reach Out and Read evidence-based program builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to develop critical early reading skills in children, beginning in infancy. As recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Reach Out and Read incorporates early literacy into pediatric practice, equipping parents with tools and knowledge to ensure that their children are prepared to learn when they start school. The program is an effective intervention because parents trust and value the advice they receive from their child's medical provider. During regular, one-on-one visits with the doctor, families grow to understand the powerful and important role they play in supporting their children's development. Parents gain the confidence and skills that enable them to support early language and literacy at home.

Currently, 60 of Alabama's pediatric practices and clinics serve as Reach Out and Read-Alabama program sites in 30 counties, which serve 40 percent of the state's children under the age of five. According to *2015 Alabama Kids Count Data*, 34 percent of children under the age of five live in single parent families and almost 27 percent live in poverty. Programs such as Reach Out and Read-Alabama are vital in providing hope to these struggling families through the stories of brand-new books prescribed by their medical provider. Charles Henderson Child Health Center celebrates 16 years as a Reach Out and Read program site in October and prescribes over 1,500 books each year.

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