

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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Jersey City is Selected to Help Launch Early Literacy Program **National League of Cities and the New Jersey League of Municipalities** **Educational Foundation Create the Mayor's Book Club Initiative** **Which Gets Boost from Healthcare Institute of NJ**

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy, the Municipal Council, and the Jersey City Free Public Library in partnership with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM) announce a collaborative effort in promoting early literacy at **10:00 a.m.** on **Friday, January 29, 2010** in City Hall Council Chambers, 280 Grove Street.

The **National League of Cities (NLC)** received a large number of strong proposals in order to partake in the program. Seven New Jersey towns were chosen for their diversity of size and socioeconomic status, as well as their dedication to supporting early childhood success. Jersey City has been selected by the NLC and the NJLM to participate in the *Mayor's Book Clubs: Promoting Early Literacy* in New Jersey technical assistance project.

“Promoting literacy in early childhood fosters child development and helps ensure a successful future for our children,” said **Mayor Healy**. “This program not only equips our children with the necessary skills they need to excel, but is also a wonderful opportunity for parents and children to engage in quality time together with a good book.”

Mayor's Book Club initiative in Jersey City will be dynamic and comprehensive to reach every child in this diverse community. In partnership with the **Jersey City Free Public Library**, children and families will be introduced to new books and obtain literacy assistance.

“The Jersey City Library is pleased to join Mayor Healy in this endeavor,” said **Library Director Priscilla Gardner**. “We know children absorb learning best in the earliest years and reading is the key to any learning throughout a child's lifetime, so early childhood literacy is of utmost importance.”

Jersey City is focused on strengthening local partnerships with schools, public libraries and community partners and developing comprehensive school readiness plans to reach more children in those communities.

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“It is crucial that we promote reading skills and habits that begin at an early age,” continued Mayor Healy. “In nurturing skills, such as oral language development, knowledge of letters and the ability to recognize words and write them, we are ensuring that we are providing our children with the best resources possible to secure their success.”

Jersey City will be receiving 750 books, donated by the **HealthCare Institute of New Jersey** and **Reach Out and Read New Jersey**, for ages 4 and under and will include 75 bilingual books. Among the titles are: *The Eensy Weensy Spider, When Sheep Sleep, and Something Big Has Been Here.*

“We know that the early years of children’s lives are critical to learning and healthy development,” said **William G. Dressel, Jr.**, Executive Director, **New Jersey State League of Municipalities**. “Children who fall behind and do not become readers by the end of third grade may never catch up to their peers or achieve grade-level reading proficiency. With the educational challenges that are facing this nation, the *Mayor’s Book Club: Promoting Early Literacy in New Jersey* project is needed and will make a difference in the lives of young children across this state.”

The Mayor’s Book Club, formed in September of 2009 under the direction of the New Jersey League of Municipalities Educational Foundation in partnership with the National League of Cities, focuses on providing young children with age-appropriate books and resources in order to promote early literacy and encourage families to create a home environment that fosters reading and learning.

HealthCare Institute of New Jersey is a trade association for the research-based pharmaceutical and medical technology industry in New Jersey. HealthCare Institute works with Reach Out and Read, a non-profit organization based in Boston that promotes childhood literacy, to raise and donate books to children. In the past two years, HINJ and its member companies have donated more than 90,000 children’s books to Reach Out and Read providers throughout New Jersey.

Technical assistance will be provided by **NLC’s Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute)** and the **New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM)** in partnership with the **National Center for Family Literacy**, and with support from the **New Jersey Verizon Foundation**.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///