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FLINT, MICHIGAN HONORED AS A PACESETTER FOR EARLY LITERACY WORK

*Campaign for Grade-Level Reading Recognizes The Flint & Genesee
Literacy Network as Exemplary*

The GLR Campaign recognizes Flint, Michigan, as a 2016 Pacesetter for demonstrating exemplary work in the Campaign's framework for success, scale and sustainability and by eliminating barriers faced by children from low-income families on the path to becoming proficient readers.

"Pacesetter Honors are among the highest awards presented by the GLR Campaign," said Ralph Smith, the managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. "We are very proud of the Flint & Genesee Literacy Network and the numerous organizations and individuals behind the community for joining forces and working tirelessly to uplift children and families. They remind us that we are seeing great progress and real results all across the country."

Fueled by the knowledge that the Flint Water Crisis has only exacerbated the need for intensified early childhood education, integrated social services and parent/family engagement and support, the Flint Genesee Literacy Network (FGLN) has brought over 300 community stakeholders (civic, education, business, philanthropy and residents) to create a shared vision and plan for change. Early results of the coalition's partners include the launch of new and expanded two-generation literacy efforts, the Read While You Wait initiative located in various barbershops and beauty salons throughout the county, and the development of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in partnership with the Flint Public Library. A new partnership between education and philanthropy leaders was formed to explore collaborative ways of expanding early childhood education in Flint, which has led to the development of two new early learning centers. Recognizing the importance of using data to align approaches and monitor progress, FGLN also established a community-developed population-level scorecard to articulate the historical and current trends related to community literacy.

Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone toward high school graduation and career success because it marks the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” National tests show that two-thirds of U.S. fourth graders (four-fifths of whom are from low-income families) are not reading proficiently. Students who have not mastered reading by that time are more likely to drop out of high school and struggle throughout their lives.

Pacesetters are part of a nationwide network of more than 300 GLR Campaign communities, representing 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Campaign communities are dedicated to narrowing the achievement gap between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers. According to the U.S. Department of Education, that gap has widened significantly in recent years, with 80 percent of children from low-income families failing to read proficiently in fourth grade compared with 49 percent of their more affluent peers. Reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a milestone on a child’s path to high school graduation and career success because it marks the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Students who have not mastered reading by that time are more likely to drop out of high school and struggle throughout their lives.

“Recognizing the Pacesetters is our way of applauding the civic leaders, organizations and agencies who have joined forces to build brighter futures for the children in their communities,” said Ralph Smith. “We are learning with them and from them what it takes to move the needle and close the gap.”

The 2016 Pacesetter communities will be formally honored at the Funder Huddle held June 13-14, 2017, during Grade-Level Reading Week in Denver, Colorado. Pacesetters will receive a certificate and special recognition banner to showcase their award throughout their communities. To learn more about the Pacesetter criteria and to view profiles for each Pacesetter honoree, visit gradelevelreading.net/pacesetter.

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The **Flint & Genesee Literacy Network** is comprised of numerous community stakeholder organizations, and has launched an ongoing collaboration to align and improve literacy resources and services in Flint and Genesee County. The Network believes that new approaches are required to solve the basic skills challenges facing our county. In line with the strategic components of the City of Flint Master Plan, the Network is committed to building on the strengths of community organizations, as well as ensuring that families needing to improve their literacy skills have access to sufficient and appropriate information and resources.

About the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

Launched in 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 300 communities, representing 42 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands with 3,800 local organizations and 250 state and local funders (including 168 United Ways). To learn more, visit gradelevelreading.net and follow the movement on Twitter @readingby3rd

