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WAKE COUNTY NAMED AS FINALIST FOR 2017 ALL-AMERICA CITY AWARD

WAKE IS ONE OF 27 COMMUNITIES COMPETING FOR TOP HONORS IN CIVIC ACTION,
COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING AND PROGRESS IN ADVANCING EARLY LITERACY

RALEIGH, NC (April 28, 2017) – Wake County has been named as a finalist for the All-America City Award for exemplary work in eliminating barriers faced by children from low-income families on the path to becoming proficient readers through the WAKE Up and Read collaboration. Finalists were selected from a pool of nearly 200 applicants; Wake is one of 27 communities across the country competing for the top honor. The annual All-America City Award, America’s oldest and most prestigious community recognition, is given to communities that exemplify outstanding civic accomplishments. In 2017, the National Civic League and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading will recognize communities that have made measurable progress for low-income children on the key drivers of early reading success. Winners will be announced on June 16 at the All-America City Awards Gathering and Campaign for Grade Level Reading National Conference in Denver, CO.

“Recognizing these communities as All-America Cities is our way of applauding the civic leaders, nonprofit organizations and agencies, and corporations that have joined forces to build brighter futures for the children in their communities,” said Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. “We are proud of these communities for answering the call and going above and beyond to ensure more hopeful futures for our nation’s most vulnerable children.”

The WAKE Up and Read campaign was launched in 2012 to address one of the most critical junctures to lifelong success, reading on grade-level by third grade. This unique community collaboration includes education, civic, philanthropic, and business leaders from across Wake County, all working together to help every child develop the necessary skills for success in school and beyond. WAKE Up and Read’s goal is to ensure that all children in our community have the tools and resources they need to become lifelong readers and learners. Funding and support for WAKE Up and Read comes from sources including Triangle Community Foundation, United Way of the Greater Triangle, and Wake County SmartStart.

WAKE Up and Read was recognized as a finalist for its efforts across Wake County to encourage families to read, talk, and play with their children and understand the importance of attending school every day. Through a multi-faceted awareness campaign and annual book drive that benefits Wake County Public School System’s ten highest percentage free and reduced lunch elementary schools and child care

facilities and community centers located near these elementary schools, WAKE Up and Read helps build home libraries and combat summer learning loss in areas of the county that are recognized book deserts. This effort is coupled with literacy training for parents and educators to maximize the impact of books children are receiving. Additionally, WAKE Up and Read enrolls families in Ready4K, a text messaging program that provides literacy tips and facts, at pediatric offices and clinics, public and private pre-K classrooms, and a partnership to prevent homelessness. WAKE Up and Read also partners with barber shops to spread messages about the importance of reading.

Successes include an increase in school readiness for entering Wake kindergarteners. The percentage of incoming kindergarten students in all Title I elementary schools scoring proficient or above went from 22 percent in 2014–15 to 34 percent in 2016–17. Additionally, chronic absence among K–3 students in Title I schools supported by WUAR decreased from 9.5 percent in 2014–15 to 7.5 percent in 2015–16. Among rising first- and second-grade students in the targeted Title I schools, summer learning losses from 22 percent in 2015 to 10 percent in 2016. WAKE Up and Read, along with other numerous agencies and organizations in Wake County who support young children and families, affected this change by offer learning opportunities for families through targeted messaging and helping them build home libraries.

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.

WAKE Up and Read is part of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and supported by the state lead organization, the North Carolina Early Childhood Foundation. The Campaign is a collaborative effort to ensure that more children in low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. More than 300 communities across the country are partners in the campaign; WAKE Up and Read is one of six in North Carolina.

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ABOUT WAKE UP AND READ

WAKE Up and Read is a collaborative effort to engage and educate Wake County about the importance of childhood literacy and to increase access to literacy resources and opportunities for all children. This unique community partnership includes education, civic, philanthropic, and business leaders from across Wake County, all working together to help every child develop the necessary skills for success in school and beyond. Our shared vision is for every child in Wake County inspired, equipped, and empowered to read. To learn more, visit www.wakeupandread.org.