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Contacts: Bally Sohal  
The UPS Store #5256  
(206) 528-7447  
[store5256@theupsstore.com](mailto:store5256@theupsstore.com)

Misti Dragano  
The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation  
(410) 263-5312  
[MDragano@1stDegree.com](mailto:MDragano@1stDegree.com)

Jill Sells, MD  
Reach Out and Read Washington State  
(206) 914-1783  
[Jill.Sells@ReachOutandReadWA.org](mailto:Jill.Sells@ReachOutandReadWA.org)

## **TOYS FOR TOTS LITERACY PROGRAM GIVES THOUSANDS OF BOOKS TO YOUNG CHILDREN ACROSS WASHINGTON**

*Reach Out and Read Washington State to Distribute 11,000 Books to Promote Reading with Young Children*

Seattle, October 28, 2009 – The evidence is clear that many children across the nation arrive at kindergarten without the skills they need to succeed. Children who start behind have great difficulty catching up with their more prepared peers. To help combat this issue, the Toys for Tots Literacy Program has partnered with Reach Out and Read Washington State to provide books to economically disadvantaged children to promote developmental skills necessary for success in school. Supporting early learning by meeting the needs of young children and families is essential to improving educational outcomes. When parents read regularly to their young children, it makes a real difference.

Launched in March 2008, the Toys for Tots Literacy Program's mission is to offer our nation's less fortunate children the ability to compete academically and to succeed in life by providing them direct access to books and educational resources that will enhance their ability to read and to communicate effectively.

“According to reports, 35 percent of American children entering kindergarten today lack the basic language skills they will need to learn to read” said LtGen. Pete Osman, USMC (ret), president and CEO of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation. “Offering our nation's most economically disadvantaged children the ability to compete academically and to succeed in life by providing them direct access to books and educational resources will enhance their ability to read and to communicate effectively.”

Reach Out and Read (ROR) is a national non-profit organization that promotes early literacy by giving new books to children during well child checkups and advising parents about the importance of reading aloud. Each year, ROR Washington State serves more than 57,000 children in 101 locations statewide. Unfortunately, with one of every six children in Washington living in a family experiencing poverty, hundreds of thousands of children lack in-home books

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and educational resources needed to instill a passion for reading. Reach Out and Read is working to address this need with the help of the Literacy Program.

Doctors and nurses know that growing up healthy means growing up with books. The ROR program provides the tools to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading. Books are given to children at pediatric check-ups from six months to five years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty.

“Reading to young children has a significant impact on their later ability to learn to read and this sets the stage for success in school and life,” said Dr. Jill Sells, Director of Reach Out and Read Washington State. “Today’s economic challenges further highlight the ongoing need to make sure families have books at home to share with their children. Reach Out and Read doctors will give these books to children across Washington, as they talk with parents about the importance of reading aloud with their infants, toddlers and preschoolers. We are humbled by the generosity of the people of Washington State and thankful to Toys for Tots and The UPS Store for their efforts in helping to support young families.”

“We know that pediatricians are some of the most trusted advisors to parents, so pairing them with books and having them be the ‘messenger’ to parents about the importance of books and reading to their child is powerful,” said Nina Auerbach, CEO of Thrive by Five Washington. “Reach Out and Read is doing essential work in our state to encourage early literacy through physicians. Thrive is proud to partner with them in communities across the state.”

“More than \$12,000 was collected at participating The UPS Store locations across the state of Washington, providing books for thousands of children. This outpouring of support has been overwhelming from the franchisees and their communities,” said Stuart Mathis, president of Mail Boxes Etc., Inc., which franchises The UPS Store and Mail Boxes Etc. brands. “We feel encouraged that despite the economic hardships so many are facing, one dollar can truly make a difference.”

A presentation of books will be conducted at The UPS Store located at 1037 NE 65th Street in Seattle on Oct. 28, 2009 at 10 a.m.

### **About The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation**

The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation is a not-for-profit organization authorized by the U.S. Marine Corps and the Department of Defense to provide fundraising and other necessary support for the annual Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program. Now in its 62nd year, Toys for Tots provides joy and a message of hope to less fortunate children through the gift of a new toy or book during the Christmas holiday season. Our gifts offer these children hope, recognition and a positive memory they will cherish for a lifetime. Many of the gifts we provide, such as books, games and sports equipment, make a significant contribution to the educational, social and recreational development of these children. In 2008, Marines distributed gifts to 7.6 million children in over 650 communities nationwide. The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation relies on individual donations from the American public as well as support from corporate sponsors. For more information, visit [www.toysfortots.org](http://www.toysfortots.org).

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**About Reach Out and Read Washington State**

Reach Out and Read Washington State (RORWA) is proud to be part of the nationwide Reach Out and Read program. RORWA strives to increase literacy and a love for books among children by ensuring that all Washington children have access to books at an early age. We encourage new medical practices to become ROR sites; provide technical assistance to new and existing sites; coordinate provider training on literacy and how to promote reading; assist with fundraising to support book distribution; and work with public and private partners to make Reach Out and Read a part of early learning efforts across Washington state. For more information, visit [www.reachoutandreadwa.org](http://www.reachoutandreadwa.org).

**About The UPS Store and Mail Boxes Etc.**

With nearly 4,400 locations in the United States, *The UPS Store* network comprises the nation's largest system of retail shipping, postal, document and business service centers. *The UPS Store* locations in the U.S. are independently owned and operated by licensed franchisees of Mail Boxes Etc., Inc., a UPS subsidiary. For additional information, please visit [www.theupsstore.com](http://www.theupsstore.com).