



# MEDIA RELEASE

OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

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## **READ CITY USA has one for the books!**

*Mayor's reading program makes its goal in record time*

**KNOXVILLE, Tenn.**—[Read City USA has an exciting story to tell!](#) Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs challenged all Knox County residents to Read Around the World 20 times in 2020 for a goal of 500,000 collective hours of reading. The deadline? December 31, 2020. On August 12, the community closed the book on the challenge—4 ½ months early. Congratulations, Knox County!

The challenge was designed to make ours the best-read community in America. Educators and literacy experts identify the third-grade reading rate as a critical milestone. From birth to third grade, students learn to read. From fourth grade on, students are reading to learn. If a student cannot read on grade level in the third grade, remediation is difficult and unlikely. The sad reality is that only 40% of students in Knox County are reading proficiently in the third grade.

The Mayor's focus on early literacy supports the Knox County Schools curriculum and encourages families to make reading a priority by spending at least 20 minutes reading every day. He introduced the Read City USA Beanstack Tracker App to help families log their hours and keep track of their progress. To sign up, all participants had to have a Knox County library card.

Nearly 5,000 Knox Countians took the challenge and logged their reading hours in the App. The Library also offered a Passport Program, in which families could log their hours without going online, and their hours would count toward the goal. Day cares, after school programs, nursing homes, and faith communities also joined the effort. Many schools assigned a Student Ambassador to coordinate events in their school.

The challenge launched in January with an event at the Burlington Library. The Mayor visited several schools for story time, celebrated Read Across America Day in March, and after COVID-19 shuttered many activities, he moved his programs online with weekly story times.

Reaching the goal doesn't mean the program is over. The Mayor is now encouraging the community keep reading and logging. The program will continue to provide [monthly incentives](#) including stickers, toys, and badges. The Library is offering Read Around the World programming through December, including its Pilot's Pursuit Literary Adventure game. Next year's goal will be built on our success and encourage more families to join the challenge.

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