



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Mayor Jacobs to Launch the Million Hour Reading Expedition for Read City USA

*KNOXVILLE, Tenn.*—Tomorrow at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 6, Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs will celebrate the success of Read City’s 2020 Challenge, *Read Around the World*, and recognize three schools who won \$2,020 as part of that program. He will also launch Read City USA’s 2021 program, *Animal Tails and Tales*, challenging all Knox County citizens to join him on the #MillionHourExpedition to make Knox County the best-read community in America by reading and logging one million hours together.

Media will register for the press conference [here](#). It will be aired on Community Television (CTV) and by internet at [www.CTVKNOX.org](http://www.CTVKNOX.org) and be streamed on Knox County's YouTube Channel at [www.YouTube.com/KnoxCountyTN](http://www.YouTube.com/KnoxCountyTN), the Knox County live stream website at [stream.KnoxCountyTN.gov](http://stream.KnoxCountyTN.gov), and the Knox County Public Library Facebook page.

“I’m excited about this year's program because we've doubled the goal, but I know we can meet it,” said Mayor Jacobs. “Reading is foundational to learning. Our schools do a great job of teaching reading, but they cannot do it alone. They need our community to come along beside them and encourage families to make reading a priority. I know reading has certainly helped our kids stay on track academically and provided a much-needed emotional anchor in this tumultuous year.”

To add a little excitement this year, Read City USA is proud to promote an original [song](#) by Sean McCollough that will be accompanied by a music video by Jim Matheny.

Knox County Public Library has created materials to help families keep track of their reading. The Tails and Tales Field Guide includes animal-themed activities and log sheets. For every 10 hours of reading, participants will earn a sticker and a skating session at the Change Center. Field Guides are now available for free at all Knox County libraries. Participants may also join the challenge by setting up an account on the [Beanstack Tracker App](#) to log online.

Many organizations have joined the Read City 2021 challenge including Boys and Girls Clubs; YMCA; YWCA Phyllis Wheatly Center; Emerald Youth Foundation; Big Brothers, Big Sisters of East Tennessee; Community Schools; and others.

In 2020, more than 6,000 individuals and groups logged a combined 637,000 hours of reading, which significantly exceeded the goal of 500,000 hours. As part of that program, First Lutheran School, Gap Creek Elementary and Mount Olive Elementary were awarded \$2,020 for literacy-based programming. Those awards were generously made possible by the following partners: The Allergy, Asthma and Sinus Center; Denark Construction; Friends of the Library; Hiatt Magical Vacations; Knox County Schools Partners in Education; Mobile Beats Entertainment; Outpatient Diagnostics; Stowers Cat; and Zack Ballinger.

Read City USA launched in 2019 with 250,000-hour *Read to the Moon* challenge. The community logged 350,000 hours of reading that year.

### **Why Read City USA?**

It is largely reported in this area that many of our third graders are not reading on grade level—a big problem because third grade is the academic year when students must know how to read to be able to learn. Worse, students who are unable to read at grade level in the third grade are more likely to stay behind throughout their academic careers, may never catch up to their classmates and have a higher rate of failing to complete high school at all.

This means Knox County will have fewer students ready to enter post-secondary education or trade schools. This translates to less students receiving advanced degrees or trade certifications and leaving Knox County without a ready workforce to attract new business to the community. Without consistently bettering our economic vitality, the skilled labor we do have may be more inclined to leave our community, perpetuating the cycle of being unable to attract new business.

Though a fun challenge, at its core Read City USA is a collaborative effort to help all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, learn to read early and well. This event is not exclusive to children and readers of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to participate.

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