



MEDIA RELEASE

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Knox County Read City USA Completes Million Hour Expedition EARLY

More than 9,300 readers joined the challenge and read for an average of 108 hours

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—In January 2021, Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs challenged all Knox Countians to read toward a collective goal of one million hours, doubling the reading goal set in 2020. We met the goal, one month early, on Nov. 29.

More than 9,281 people participated in the reading challenge, logging an average of 108 hours for the year. Of the total, 5,574 people logged individually, and 119 groups logged reading hours for 3,707 people.

Working with Knox County Public Library and many community agencies, the effort to read and log hours took on an animal-centric theme called “Tails and Tales.” Each month, readers were encouraged to keep turning pages with themed book suggestions, activities, and crafts. Every library location had a community tracker called Jacob Giraffe to chart the overall progress. For every 50,000 hours logged, Jacob earned a new spot.

The program engaged afterschool groups, business, senior centers, and more to join the challenge. Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, Emerald Youth Foundation, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and the John T. O’Connor Senior Centers are among those who had formal programs to help encourage reading with their clients.

The goal of Read City USA is support families in making reading a priority. Currently, fewer than 40% of children are reading on grade level by the end of the third grade. COVID-19 has eroded some of the recent gains in reading attainment. While the schools do a good job of teaching reading, Mayor Jacobs recognizes the importance of community engagement to augment their efforts.

“I am so proud of this community for recognizing the importance of literacy and helping us meet this ambitious goal,” Mayor Jacobs said. “When children read at grade level, they are set up for success in school and in life.”

The announcement for next year’s challenge theme and goal will be made on Jan. 11 from Emerald Youth Foundation’s Haslam Sansom Ministry Complex on Texas Avenue. More details to come soon.

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