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# Ferst Foundation Announces its 2011 Favorite Reader

**Madison (GA)** – Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy (FFCL) is pleased to announce the winner of our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual CEO Battle, held from January 13, 2011 to February 7, 2011. The contest was an online video battle between top Georgia CEOs in business and education. Participants were videotaped reading to preschool children to emphasize the importance of early childhood education and the need to develop the love of reading in children early to better prepare those kids to enter school. This year's **Favorite Reader** is Paul Wood, President and CEO of Georgia Electric Membership Corporation (GEMC). GEMC represents Georgia's 42 Electric Membership Corporations (EMCs) providing service to 4.6 million residents and businesses in Georgia. The videos were posted on the foundation web page ([www.ferstfoundation.org](http://www.ferstfoundation.org)) where they were viewed by the general public who voted for their favorite reader from seven participating CEO's. These leaders volunteered to help FFCL drive home the importance of providing age appropriate reading materials regularly in homes around the state. "Statistics show that a staggering number (61%) of low income homes do not have a single piece of reading material suitable for a child aged 0 to 5 years of age." Wood said in explaining his support for the Ferst Foundation mission. "Research has proven that children who do not have access to books and are not read to during their critical brain development period – birth to 4 years old – fall far behind those children who have parents or caregivers who read to them," he noted

Prior to becoming President/CEO of GEMC in September 1997, Wood served from 1983 to 1997 as Executive Director of the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, Inc. He began his rural electric career in 1965 at East Central Oklahoma Electric Cooperative, Inc. and in 1977 was appointed General Manager of Dixie EMC, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

During his 46 year rural electric career, Wood has served as President of the Rural Electric Statewide Managers' Association (RESMA); as a member of the NRECA Management Advisory Committee; NRECA Procedures Committee; the NRECA Unity Task Force, the NRECA Health Care Task Force and the Touchstone Energy board of Directors.

Wood currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Georgia Department of Economic Development; Chairman of the Georgia Corporation for Economic Development, Inc.; and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. He also serves on the 4-H Foundation Board of Trustees and is a member of the FDR Warm Springs Memorial Advisory Committee and the KidsPeace Board of Associates. In 2004, he served as Co-Chairman of the Governor's Conference on Tourism and in 2007 he was appointed by Governor Perdue to Chair the Commission for a New Georgia Service Delivery Task Force and in 2009 served on the Governor's Water Advisory Committee.

Woods is a member of St. Jude's Episcopal Church in Marietta, and has participated in numerous mission trips to Honduras. Wood received a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing from Northwestern Louisiana State University and served as a Captain in the U. S. Army Special Forces (Airborne) and the Louisiana National Guard.

Other participants in this year's CEO Battle included the following Georgia CEO's:

- William Griffin – CEO - Rosser International
- Michael Russell – CEO – H. J. Russell & Company
- Ruth Knox – President – Wesleyan College, Macon
- Cathy Cox – President – Young Harris College, Young Harris
- Raymond King – CEO – Zoo Atlanta
- William Kimble – Managing Partner – KPMG, Atlanta

**Award Presentation:**

Mr. Wood will be presented with the **Favorite Reader** award on Tuesday, February 15, 2011 during the luncheon program of the Kiwanis Club of Atlanta which begins at 12:15pm at the Loudermilk Center located at 40 Courtland Street North East, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.

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*Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy was formed in 1999 to improve the odds for Georgia kids and promote a more competitive and productive workforce through a program which mails a free book to children every month from birth to age five years. Over the past ten years, FFCL has given over 2.5 million books in 78 of Georgia's 159 counties to over 150,000 Georgia children.*