

Children in Georgia's Child Care and Foster Care get Free Books to Age 5

ATLANTA (GA) – The Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy (FFCL) have teamed up to give one of the most life changing gifts there is to give – the gift of reading.

The goal of the partnership is to address childhood literacy across the state of Georgia – specifically low income families and children in foster care. To reach them, every child enrolled in the state's Childcare and Parent services (CAPS) program, as well as children in foster care will receive from the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, an age-appropriate book in the mail every month from birth until the child's fifth birthday.

“Approximately 61% of low income families do not have a single piece of reading material suitable for a child,” said B.J. Walker, Commissioner of the Department of Human Services. “That's a staggering number. 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.”

“For Ten years, we have been giving books to Georgia's children to give our State an educated, competitive, and productive workforce”, Founder Robin Ferst said. “As a result, our children are coming to school better prepared to learn to read - 33-44% better for those we have reached to date. I am thrilled that we will be able to extend this simple, cost effective program throughout the State.”

Research shows:

- Seventy-five percent of students who are poor readers in third grade will remain poor readers in high school.
- Low income children hear 30 million fewer words than children of professional families.
- By age 12 months children can learn up to 300 words – before they can speak them.

Wednesday, December 22, 2010 at 11:00 a.m. DHS Commissioner B. J. Walker and Robin Ferst, President of FFCL will meet with parents and children who benefit from this initiative to discuss the effects this program will have on literacy levels across Georgia. The event will be held in the atrium of the **Early Learning and Literacy Center at Dunbar Elementary, 404 Fulton Street, SE Atlanta, GA. 30312.**

