

Governor and Congressmen Help South Carolina Reach Out and Read Celebrate "Reach Out and Read Across South Carolina Day" March 3, 2003

South Carolina - March 3, 2003 - These days, pediatricians all across South Carolina are sending families home from checkups with a very important prescription - "read aloud to your children." Today, Governor Mark Sanford along with Congressmen Gresham Barrett, Henry Brown, and James Clyburn are all helping to celebrate pediatric literacy and the Reach Out and Read program across the state.

"Reach Out and Read Across South Carolina" is a day celebrating the importance of early reading skills and the strides the ROR program is making to better prepare children for lifelong learning. Reach Out and Read (ROR) is a program which encourages parents to read aloud to their children, gives them tips and advice on how they can prepare their children to be strong readers, and sends them home from each visit with a new children's book.

"Reach Out and Read is a unique program which affords children and parents the chance to get a jump start on reading, better preparing children for learning and for school," comment Dr. Caughman Taylor, Medical Director of Palmetto Health Children's Hospital and Reach Out and Read-South Carolina.

To support the Governor and Congressmen's leadership in promoting literacy and education for all children, Scholastic Inc., the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, donated 5,000 new books to the South Carolina Reach Out and Read Coalition. Scholastic is a long-time corporate supporter of Reach Out and Read at the national level, donating over 1 million books and creating bilingual titles in 12 different languages to help Reach Out and Read serve parents whose first language is not English.

The Governor and each representative will read with a group of children at each pediatric clinic, will get a tour of the Reach Out and Read site, and will send each child home with a new book. The efforts of these state leaders illustrate the importance of early literacy intervention. ROR reaches children from the age of 6 months to 5 years, better preparing them for the challenges of school.

The Reach Out and Read program started in 1989 at Boston Medical Center in Massachusetts, and has since grown into a national movement in pediatrics, serving 1.5 million children in all 50 states. The ROR-SC Coalition was founded in 1998, led by the Palmetto Health Children's Hospital. In South Carolina, there are over 70 ROR program across the state, giving out over 102,000 books to the children annually, and serving over 50% of the state's Medicaid population.