



For Release
March 1, 2006

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PRESS RELEASE

100,000 students ready to help Hurricane Katrina's Youngest Victims and this is just the Beginning of a movement!

Washington, DC - In the past two weeks **100,000 students** have officially registered to help Hurricane Katrina's youngest victims. National research reports **thirty-seven percent** of all fourth grade children in the United States are reading at below basic levels.(1) and **fifty-five percent** of poor children are functionally illiterate. (1) This statistic is sure to plummet in the gulf region if literacy is left behind during the reconstruction.

The Heart of America Foundation® will engage the 2.7 million members of the National Education Association nationwide to restock the shelves of public school libraries, classrooms libraries and home libraries.

Children across the country want to help....and this is just the beginning. Children have committed to donating new and like new books for other children displaced by Hurricanes Katrina, Wilma and Rita that will be shipped to the gulf region concentrating on schools and students displaced by the hurricanes.

The Heart of America Foundation®
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Thousands of children from New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region have had their lives shattered by Hurricane Katrina. The Heart of America Foundation®, through the Books From the Heart™ program, is joining with the National Education Association (NEA) and First Book to kick-off a year-long effort. This week each organization is in Mississippi, Texas and Louisiana to support NEA's Read Across America program delivering more than 16,000 books to local school children and school libraries.

"The nation's children are watching this tragedy unfold for children in the Gulf Coast area. Through this program, children can make a difference in the life of another child affected by this terrible catastrophe," said Angie Halamandaris, President and co-founder of the Heart of America Foundation®.

Teachers and civic leaders are encouraged to visit www.heartofamerica.org where they can register to participate. On the website you can chose to be a donor of new or like new books or to be a recipient of books. The Heart of America Foundation® officials matches the donors/recipients based on needs and resources. HOA ensures quality donations and age appropriate books distributed.

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The Heart of America Foundation's mission is to teach the values at the heart of America and to help people, particularly children, learn that they help themselves when they help others. Our goal is to give children everywhere the tools they need to read, succeed and make a difference. Our programs uniquely combine character education, literacy, and service learning. We are a national, nonsectarian, non-partisan, nonprofit, humanitarian organization.

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Available for interview:

- Donors registered to donate books
- Schools/ Individuals who have signed-up to receive books
- Angie Halamandaris, President of The Heart of America Foundation®
- Staci Maiers, Media Relations for the National Education Association

Sources:

1. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Fourth-Grade Reading, 2003.

Background Information:

- The Heart of America Foundation® www.heartofamerica.org
- National Education Association www.nea.org
- First Book www.firstbook.org