



Contact: Michelle Mobley

PH: 202-359-1957

E: [michelle@heartofamerica.org](mailto:michelle@heartofamerica.org)

**For Release**

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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **Jacksonville Schools Libraries to Receive a “Makeover”**

*Students from the Jacksonville Community Compete  
to Have Their School Library READesign®*

**WHO:** The Heart of America Foundation (HOA), a non-profit that teaches children to read, succeed and make a difference has joined together with media Sponsors WAWS FOX30 and the University of North Florida Honors Program to launch its newest project in Jacksonville, FL called “READesign®” Three local elementary schools will be revitalized into warm, friendly places where children will want to spend time and learn to read. These schools were selected out of dozens nominated for READesign™. Schools selected include **Long Branch Elementary, Spring Park Elementary** and **Cedar Hills Elementary**.

**WHAT:** READesign™ aims to transform school libraries by redecorating, revitalizing technology, replenishing book shelves and by renewing community support and interest in enriching student lives and helping students regain lost opportunities for learning. READesign® will update collections and replenish shelves with titles children will want to read and resources that will help teachers in the classroom.

**Kick-Off:** Saturday, August 26, 2006

8:30 a.m.- 4:00pm	Redecorating, Replenishing book shelves
10:00 a.m.	Family read-a-thon for local members of the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Celebrity readers</li><li>- Free brand new books for children and parent resources will be distributed</li></ul>
12:00 p.m.	Lunch served to families/ volunteers

<b>WHERE:</b>	Long Branch Elementary	Spring Park Elementary
	3723 Franklin Street	2250 Spring Park Rd.
	Jacksonville, FL 32206	Jacksonville, FL 32207

The Heart of America Foundation®  
Michelle Mobley  
[michelle@heartofamerica.org](mailto:michelle@heartofamerica.org)



**WHY:** When the heart of the school is a vibrant center of books and reading, it makes a difference. Since the late 1980s, a significant body of research has shown a positive relationship between school libraries and student achievement. School libraries positively influence student achievement in terms of reading scores, literacy, and general learning. Nationally, school libraries average 22 books per pupil. In depressed communities, it is possible to have school libraries with one book or less per student. The Heart of America Foundation®, through the READesign® program, aims to bring the collections of program participants up to the national average. READesign® recognizes the vital role classroom libraries play in providing daily opportunities for students to read materials of their own choosing for pleasure. Classroom libraries, as well as books for students' home libraries, will be provided through the READesign® “library makeover” program.

**Available for interview:**

- Angie Halamandaris, President of The Heart of America Foundation®
- Lillie Granger, Principal, Longbranch Elementary School
- Margaret Sordian, Principal, Spring Park Elementary School
- Buffy Walsh, Director of Branding & Promotion, WAWS FOX30
- BlueCross BlueShield

**Background Information:**

**Literacy Statistics**

- Thirty-seven percent of all fourth grade children in the United States are reading at below basic levels.
- Fifty-five percent of children are functionally illiterate.
- Communities ranking high in reading achievement tests have: an abundance of books in public libraries, easy access to books in the community at large, and a large number of textbooks per student.
- Inability to read is linked to poverty, dependence on welfare, unemployment, and crime.
- **ADDITIONAL STATISTICS AVAILABLE**

The Heart of America Foundation®

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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