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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**BOOKS FOR KEEPS RETURNS TO 10 AREA SCHOOLS STARTING APRIL 27**  
**Athens organization to give 45,000 books to 3,800 students over three-week period**

ATHENS, Ga., ATLANTA, AND WARRENTON GA. – April 29, 2015 – For an area nonprofit, making a difference in a child’s life is as simple as giving her a bag of 12 books.

And this spring, Athens-based Books for Keeps is making that happen at 10 area elementary schools.

Studies find that giving low-income children books at the beginning of summer has an impact on reading achievement similar to attending summer school. This knowledge drives Books for Keeps back to elementary schools all over Northeast Georgia each spring – bearing 12 books for every child in grades Kindergarten through 5.

Books for Keeps distributions begin April 27 at Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary School in Athens and conclude May 15 at J.J. Harris Elementary School. The organization will be in Atlanta Public Schools serving the children of Dunbar Elementary School on May 4. Over the course of three weeks, Books for Keeps will give away more than 45,000 books to 3,800 students in Athens, Atlanta and rural Warrenton.

In each school served, every child is invited to pick out 12 books – from among hundreds of age-appropriate, high-interest titles – just in time for summer. This model was shaped by research that identified the approach as a simple, cost-effective way to prevent summertime learning loss. Known as “summer slide,” this loss of reading achievement is suffered disproportionately by children from low-income families.

“For some of these children, the books they pick out on this day may be the first books they’ve ever owned. Every child should have the opportunity to feel the pride of ownership and excitement about reading,” said Books for Keeps Executive Director Leslie Hale. “The chance to pick out their own books – regardless of ability to pay – gives these children empowerment over their own education.”

A second-grade Dunbar Elementary School student explained the event best, telling a volunteer last spring, “This is the best day of my life.”

The joy of distributions continues even after the event. Gaines Elementary teacher

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[WWW.BOOKSFORKEEPS.ORG](http://WWW.BOOKSFORKEEPS.ORG)

Kimberly Castle posted to the Books for Keeps Facebook page: “As a teacher at Gaines, I want to say a huge THANK YOU! My kindergartners were so excited to explore their new books yesterday. As I looked around my room, every face was smiling and full of excitement. Books For Keeps is truly a blessing for our kids!”

Members of the media are encouraged to join Books for Keeps and capture the magic. Additionally, Books for Keeps is still seeking volunteers to fill some distribution shifts – volunteers can sign up via [booksforkeeps.org](http://booksforkeeps.org) or [handsonnortheastgeorgia.org](http://handsonnortheastgeorgia.org).

Between April 27 and May 15, the organization will distribute books at Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary, Downtown Academy, Stroud Elementary, Alps Road Elementary, Gaines Elementary, Fowler Drive Elementary, Winterville Elementary, and J.J. Harris Elementary schools in Athens. Additionally, Books for Keeps will take books to students at Dunbar Elementary School in Atlanta and Freeman Elementary School in Warrenton.

The organization’s program expansion both inside and out of Athens is part of a commitment made in 2011 to the Clinton Global Initiative. At the time, Books for Keeps committed to serve every Athens school where 90 percent or more students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and to reach one school in urban Atlanta and one school in rural Georgia.

To learn more about this commitment or about Books for Keeps in general, visit [www.booksforkeeps.org](http://www.booksforkeeps.org).

For more information, including a schedule of distribution dates and times, contact [leslie.hale@booksforkeeps.org](mailto:leslie.hale@booksforkeeps.org) or (706) 410-1912.

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***About Books for Keeps:*** Books for Keeps started as one woman’s effort to help a child who loved to read but had no books at home. It grew from a grassroots movement into a research-based program to end summer by ensuring children have access to books when school lets out. The nonprofit was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization in 2011.

Books for keeps distributes books to students ranging from pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The flagship elementary school program, *Stop Summer Slide!*, is based on a University of Florida study that found giving economically-disadvantaged elementary school children each 12 high-interest books at the beginning of summer had an impact on reading achievement statistically similar to attending summer school.

Books for Keeps distributed 55,000 books to students in 2015, including 45,000 books given to K-5 students through *Stop Summer Slide!*

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