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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BOOKS FOR KEEPS ANNOUNCES MAJOR PROGRAM EXPANSION AHEAD OF BOOK SALE

ATHENS, GA. – August 8, 2013 – Leading up to its biggest fundraiser of the year, Books for Keeps is announcing a significant increase in the number of children it serves.

Committing to nearly double its program, *Stop Summer Slide!*, in spring 2014, the organization is undertaking a major expansion just two years after incorporating as a nonprofit. The expansion will deepen Books for Keeps' commitment to the Athens community, while extending its reach outside Athens for the first time.

The plans are in keeping with a commitment made at a meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in 2011 by founder and board member Melaney Smith. There, Smith agreed to serve every Athens elementary school with 90 percent or more students receiving free or reduced lunch. She also committed to reach one school in Atlanta and one school in rural Georgia.

“At the time, we did not know the need in Athens would actually grow,” Smith said. “Rather than renege on that promise, we are taking a huge leap. We are keeping our commitment to Athens children while taking our program to those pockets in Georgia where we know the need is equal, and in some cases, even more acute.”

This announcement comes as Books for Keeps gears up for its largest fundraiser of the year, the third annual BFK Book Sale. This year's sale will run from Aug. 22 through 25, and will be held in Homewood Village Shopping Center. Last year's sale, which featured 25,000 books, raised \$16,000. This year, an estimated 40,000 books will be for sale.

In May 2013, Books for Keeps' flagship program, *Stop Summer Slide!*, reached 2,000 students in five Athens elementary schools. In 2014, the nonprofit will distribute books in two additional Athens schools, Winterville Elementary School and Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary School, adding approximately 1,000 children.

"The Clarke County School District is very appreciative of Books for Keeps' continued

BFK Book sale schedule

Homewood Village Shopping Center (2415-C Jefferson Road, just off the 10 Loop)

Thurs., Aug. 22: 5-8 p.m.

(\$10 entry for Sneak Preview)

Fri., Aug. 23: 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sat., Aug. 24: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sun., Aug 25: 12-5 p.m. (bag sale)

- more -

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support for our students, and are thrilled that two more sites are being added. Helping cultivate a love of reading is something that will serve our students well throughout their lives. It is undoubtable that the Books for Keeps board has made a real difference in our community with this level of commitment," said Superintendent Philip D. Lanoue.

Also in 2014, for the first time ever, Books for Keeps intends to serve two elementary schools outside Athens. The program will target one new school in Atlanta and one new school in rural Georgia. Executive Director Leslie Hale is working with the Books for Keeps board to select the new schools on the basis of need, geography and size.

"This program started because of significant and undeniable need in the community we call home – and we will always retain our commitment first and foremost to Athens children," Hale said. "However, there are parts of the state where access to libraries is even more limited, supplemental primary-school programs are harder to find, and children are starving for reading material that will keep their brains active, engaged and growing outside of the school year."

The upcoming BFK Book Sale is a major source of funds for Books for Keeps' programs each year. All books are acquired through donations, often via book drives organized by partners in the community.

Books at the sale will start at \$.50, with newer hardbacks selling for up to \$3. Prices will drop each day after the start of the book sale until the last day of the sale, when shoppers can walk away with a grocery bag full of books for just \$5.

Books for Keeps thanks our sponsors: Nolon Lumber Sales; Allergy Partners of Georgia, Allstate – Merryn Walker Agency; BookScouter.com; Supporters of EmpowerEDGeorgia.org; Carol & Rob Winthrop; First American Bank & Trust; Holland & Company/MacRae; Mitchell Bridge Dental Associates; Taqueria La Parrilla; and Kathy Prescott & Grady Thrasher.

For more information, contact leslie.hale@booksforkeeps.org or (706) 410-1912.

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 slide in Athens, Ga., 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 12th 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 40,000 books to Athens-Clarke children in the 2012-13 school year, including 24,000 through *Stop Summer Slide!*

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