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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Books for Keeps facing emergency need for new warehouse space**

ATHENS, GA. – Jan. 14, 2013 – Books for Keeps is facing a crisis of the sort it hasn't experienced in nearly three years, when the roof of its donated storage space collapsed during a storm. This spring, the Athens nonprofit will lose access to its free warehouse space.

“Fire & Flavor has graciously given us two-and-a-half years of free warehouse space and labor, and made it possible for us to grow from serving 3 schools to 10. We cannot adequately express our gratitude to the owners and employees there,” said Leslie Hale, executive director of Books for Keeps. “But, as with most businesses, they grow and circumstances change. Due to this, BFK must find new warehouse space for our operations.”

Books for Keeps' first priority is to keep a commitment to serve the 3,700 children it has promised to serve in May. The organization is facing a deadline of March 30 to move its books into a new facility.

The months of January through April are Books for Keeps' busiest, as the organization prepares books for distribution in May. Losing its warehouse space would cripple Books for Keeps' ability to prepare for spring distributions.

A successful end-of-year fundraising campaign brought enough money into Books for Keeps to buy the books needed to serve students in its program this year. However, the organization was not anticipating the need to pay for warehouse space in 2014, and therefore does not have funds on hand – or budgeted for – that expense.

While the organization recognizes that free space may not be available elsewhere, Books for Keeps is asking the community for help finding a new home for its books and operations – either at low cost or no cost. Individuals with space, or with suggestions of how to find space, are asked to contact Executive Director Leslie Hale at (706) 410-1912 or [leslie.hale@booksforkeeps.org](mailto:leslie.hale@booksforkeeps.org). Books for Keeps is also forming a facilities committee and is seeking members.

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In order to adequately serve Books for Keeps' storage and processing needs, the organization is seeking space with the following characteristics: roughly 4,000-7,000 square feet; a solid roof with no water leakage; pest-free; running water with a bathroom; transfer truck-level loading dock with access to a forklift and driver; and someone on hand Monday through Friday to receive book shipments.

"This is the biggest challenge our organization has faced since our program began," said founder Melaney Smith. "The Athens community has rallied to help us in the past, and we are asking for help again. Nearly 4,000 children are counting on us."

For more information, 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 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!* In May 2014, it has plans to distribute 45,000 books through *Stop Summer Slide!* at 10 elementary schools in Athens, Atlanta, and Warrenton.

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