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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NONPROFIT TO GIVE AWAY 12 BOOKS TO EVERY CHILD AT ATLANTA SCHOOL APRIL 30

ATHENS, GA. – April 18, 2014 – No child should go a summer without great books to read.

It is this mantra that will bring Books for Keeps, an Athens-based nonprofit organization, to Paul E. Dunbar Elementary School on April 30. On that day, Books for Keeps will invite every student at Dunbar to pick out 12 books to take home and keep.

“Books have the power to transform our lives, reveal new ways of seeing the world, and, in the simplest sense, to keep our neurons firing and our brains active,” said Leslie Hale, executive director of Books for Keeps. “However, far too many children lack access to books during summertime for a range of reasons, and it is hurting their educational outcomes. Our goal is to change that, one school at a time.”

Books for Keeps was founded with a simple mission: to provide children with guaranteed access to books in order to stop summertime learning loss, also known as “summer slide.” This loss of educational attainment is particularly prevalent among children from low-income families, who are less likely than their peers to have access to books outside of school.

On April 30, for the first time at Dunbar Elementary, Books for Keeps will set up a large supply of books, inviting students to come one grade-level at a time to select 12 books each. Every child has 20 to 30 minutes to browse for books before carrying them home – for free – in a tote bag provided by the organization.

“For some of these children, the books they pick out on this day may be the first books they’ve ever owned,” said Hale. “Every child should have the opportunity to feel the pride of ownership and to feel excitement about reading – whether reading about sharks or a favorite basketball player, about princesses or ordinary children just like themselves.”

Members of the media are invited to join Books for Keeps to capture the magic.

On April 30 at Dunbar Elementary, distributions will begin at 8 a.m. and continue until 2 p.m. Books for Keeps will hold a small, invitation-only reception from 12 to 12:45 p.m.,

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for community members and civic leaders to learn about the organization. Members of the media are invited to cover the reception and use it as an opportunity to learn more about Books for Keeps.

The organization's program expansion 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.

Dunbar Elementary School was selected as Books for Keeps' Atlanta site in partnership with school officials, Atlanta Public Schools, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation Civic Site in Atlanta.

To learn more about this commitment and about Books for Keeps in general, visit www.booksforkeeps.org.

For more information, contact leslie.hale@booksforkeeps.org or (828) 713-2132.

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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