

For Immediate Release
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Teachers and Community Come Together to Inspire Young Readers

Second Annual Read Across Connecticut Blue Back Book Drive Collects Thousands of Books for Students in Need

Hundreds of Connecticut families gathered today at Blue Back Square in West Hartford to donate books and celebrate the joy of reading at the Read Across Connecticut Blue Back Book Drive.

Organized by the Connecticut Education Foundation (CEF) in partnership with iHeartMedia and Blue Back Square, the second annual book drive collected thousands of new and gently used books for children from Pre-K through grade 12. The donated books will be distributed through Little Free Libraries across the state, ensuring students in under-resourced communities have access to books and opportunities to build literacy skills.

"Books open doors to new worlds, and every child deserves that opportunity," said Joslyn DeLancey, president of CEF. "Thanks to the generosity of Connecticut families, we are helping to fill Little Free Libraries in communities where access to books is limited. These donations will allow children to have books of their own so they can discover the joy of reading and develop skills that will benefit them for a lifetime."

The Saturday book drive transformed Blue Back Square into a literacy celebration, complete with live music with iHeart personality Amanda Jo from Country 92.5, giveaways, games, face painting, and balloon animals. A special story time at Barnes & Noble engaged young readers and hands-on activities, including a craft station, gave children the opportunity to express themselves as they created bookmarks and bracelets.

Research confirms that children who grow up with access to books are more likely to develop strong reading skills, graduate from high school, and achieve long-term academic success. However, according to the U.S. Department of Education, the percentage of children who read for fun on their own time is at its lowest point in 40 years.

"We know that reading is the foundation for future learning," said DeLancey. "By providing books to children who may not have them at home, we are fostering a love of reading and helping to close the literacy gap."

The Read Across Connecticut Blue Back Book Drive would not be possible without the support of community partners iHeart and Blue Back Square.

"Blue Back Square is proud to support this initiative and bring the community together to promote reading," said Elizabeth Zigmont, spokesperson for Blue Back Square. "Seeing families and children come together to donate books and celebrate literacy is truly inspiring."

"iHeart Media recognizes the profound impact that reading has on a child's future and is proud to participate as the media partner for the CEF Blue Back Book Drive," said Allison Demers, radio personality and iHeart Director of Community Access. "This event, not only shares the joy of reading, but also provides children with the tools they need to succeed, while also supporting the incredible teachers who dedicate themselves to shaping young minds."

CEF encourages community members to continue supporting literacy efforts by donating new or gently used children's books throughout the year. The foundation is committed to ensuring that every child in Connecticut has the opportunity to develop a love of reading and build a brighter future.

For more information on how to support CEF's literacy initiatives, visit <https://cea.org/read-across-connecticut/>.

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The Connecticut Education Association is Connecticut's largest teachers' union, representing active, retired, and aspiring educators across the state.

The Connecticut Education Foundation is a nonprofit charitable foundation established in 1991 to help children and teachers with extraordinary personal hardships and students planning teaching careers.

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