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AMID CPS CHALLENGES, ACTORS FROM CHICAGO-BASED HIT TV SHOWS TEAM UP WITH OTHERS TO SUPPORT EARLY LITERACY FOR CHICAGO KIDS

“Chicago Fire”, “Empire” and “Scrubs” Actors Launch #FiredUpForLiteracy, a Crowdfunding Campaign to Support Reading In Motion’s Innovative Arts-Based Literacy Program in Eight Chicago Public Schools

(CHICAGO) – Cast members of Chicago-based hit television shows including “Chicago Fire” and “Empire” have teamed up with Donald Faison of “Scrubs” and other actors and musicians to raise funds for a critical early literacy program in Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Reading In Motion provides more than 5,000 pre-K, Kindergarten and first grade students from challenging environments with highly effective reading instruction that integrates music and drama to engage and accelerate learning. Performers are using #FiredUpForLiteracy to promote a crowdfunding campaign that will fund Reading In Motion’s literacy program in eight public elementary schools across the city serving children in greatest need.

David Eigenberg, Kara Kilmer, Miranda Rae Mayo, Kurt Ehrmann, Chaon Cross and Robyn Coffin of “Chicago Fire”, Antione McKay and Sara Sevigny of “Empire”, Donald Faison of “Scrubs”, Tim Kazurinsky of “Saturday Night Live” and “Police Academy” and Tony Award winner Jessie Mueller, starring in the Broadway musical “Waitress” and the touring cast of “Jersey Boys”, are volunteer spokespeople for a \$100,000 campaign to fund Reading In Motion’s arts-based literacy program in 18 kindergarten classrooms throughout the City.

“The uncertainty of the CPS and state budgets make it difficult for schools to try innovative solutions,” said Karl Androes, Executive Director of Reading In Motion. “As a nonprofit, we have the ability to raise financial support to make innovation happen, even in the midst of turbulence. We’ve seen the ups and downs of Chicago Public Schools in the 33 years that we’ve worked in the district.”

Chicago has one of the lowest adult literacy rates in the country at 53 percent. Reading In Motion’s mission is to get every student reading at grade level by the end of first grade. Research supports that reading at grade level by the end of first grade puts kids on a more successful path to high school graduation and helps them avoid incarceration, unemployment and poverty as an adult. “By promoting our campaign, the Chicago community of performers and artists around the country are making an incredible difference in the lives of children across this city by supporting our arts-based programs,” Androes said.

\$100,000 in contributions through this campaign provides this program for free at Lawndale Elementary (Lawndale), Tilton Elementary (Garfield Park), Lowell Elementary (Humboldt Park), Nicholson STEM Academy (Englewood), Manierre Elementary (Old Town/Cabrini Green), Funston Elementary (Logan Square), Gray Elementary (Portage Park) and Davis Elementary (Brighton Park). Approximately 90 percent of the students in schools that Reading In Motion serves receive free or reduced lunch.

The television and Broadway actors join a respected group of Chicago actors, musicians and teachers, including Steppenwolf ensemble members James Vincent Meredith and Francis Guinan, in sharing short videos highlighting the importance of reading in their own lives and careers as well as sharing what they are reading:

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| Mick Archer | Instructor, Old Town School of Folk Music |
| Nikki Bloomsmith | Ensemble, Strawdog Theatre |
| E. Faye Butler | "Ghost, The Musical," Main State Music Theatre |
| Will Clinger | "Wild Travels" on WTTW |
| CaCee Cobb | MTV, "Newlyweds: Nick & Jessica" |
| Michelle Courvais | Associate Artist, Chicago Dramatists |
| Gianine DeFrancesco | "Rabbit Hole," Aston Rep Theatre Company |
| Augie DeLarosa | House DJ |
| Gerald Dowd | Grammy-Nominated Musician, "Home Now" |
| Laurie Empen | Ms. Laurie's Play Group (Early Childhood Education) |
| Mitchell Fain | "The Midnight Circus: Chicago's Circus" |
| Felicia P. Fields | Tony-Nominated Actor, "The Color Purple" |
| John Francisco | Mister John's Music (Early Childhood Education) |
| Robbie Fulks | Singer-Songwriter, "Upland Stories " |
| Suzanne Gillen | "Secret Garden," Court Theatre |
| Marya Grandy | "Juno," Timeline Theatre |
| Lawrence Grimm | Founding Ensemble, A Red Orchid Theatre |
| Hillary Gokenbach | Theatre and Improv Actor |
| Sarah Hayes | "The House of Blue Leaves," Raven Theatre |
| Lynne Jordan | Singer, "Lynne Jordan & The Shivers" |
| Dylan Jost | Actor, Writer and Producer |
| Andy Lawfer | Ensemble, Strawdog Theatre |
| Ross Lehman | "One Man Two Guvnors," Court Theatre |
| Sean Patrick Leonard | Actor, "Machine Gun Preacher" |
| Rob Lindley | "Funny Man," Northlight Theatre |
| Donica Lynn | "Dreamgirls," Porchlight Music Theatre |
| Corbette Pasko | Playwright and Ensemble, Factory Theatre |
| Doug Peck | Music Director, "Dreamgirls," Porchlight Music Theatre |
| Jennifer Pompa | Stage and Film Actor, "Eden Court" |
| Mercedes Rohlfs | Theatre Artist, Teacher and Administrator |
| Jon Sevigny | Actor/Producer |
| Jay Steigmann | Improv Teacher, Writer, Performer at Second City |
| Janna Walson | Director of Curriculum & Instruction, High School in Chicago |
| Patrick Williams | Music Director, "Jersey Boys" Traveling Show: "Under The Streetlamp" |
| Philip Winston | Ensemble, Signal Ensemble Theatre |

The campaign will run April 18 - June 17, 2016. More details are available at readinginmotion.org/get-fired-up-for-literacy-media-page and <http://bit.ly/RIMindiegogo>

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About Reading in Motion

Reading In Motion is a nonprofit organization that gets students reading at grade level or above within the first years of school, especially those students whose environment or circumstances put them in greater need of support. It offers an engaging, innovative literacy model, designed in both Spanish and English, that collaborates with teachers, training and supporting them to measurably improve students' reading, and builds basic, crucial reading skills early to start students on the path for a lifetime of successful learning. The program includes curriculum, materials, daily lesson plans, digital platform and assigned coaches throughout the school year to help teachers successfully implement the program during the school day. Currently, 82% of Reading In Motion students reach grade-level reading compared to the overall CPS average of 61% in kindergarten and first grade. Reading In Motion is based in Chicago, Illinois and currently reaching students in 39 Chicago Public Schools. Learn more at readinginmotion.org.