**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 26, 2026

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**Heart of Missouri United Way hosts Read Across Columbia Event at Parkade Elementary**

Columbia, MO — October 26, 2026 — Heart of Missouri United Way will host a special Reading Across Columbia Media Day on Thursday, October 29, at 12:30 p.m. at Parkade Elementary School. The event will encourage first and second grade children to engage in reading through ease of access and promote finding joy in the books they read for a brighter future.

Read Across Columbia, as a signature program for the Heart of Missouri United Way, provides new age-appropriate books to elementary school students in the Boone County area and beyond. This year, Heart of Missouri United Way will distribute 3,800 books to area students. At the core of this program is access to reading materials for students, to help promote at these critical ages. In addition to the books student also receive a coupon from the Daniel Boone Regional Library for an additional book.

“Reading is an essential part of every child’s education,” said Talia Jackson, President & CEO of Heart of Missouri United Way. “It strengthens critical thinking, builds skills children

will use throughout their lives, and opens doors to future opportunities. By helping ensure students have books at home, we are reinforcing the positive impact of overall literacy."

In addition to Parkade, the following first and second grade students will also receive books from Heart of Missouri United Way, and a book coupon from Daniel Boone Regional Library:

- Battle Elementary, Derby Ridge Elementary, Shepard Elementary and West Boulevard Elementary

Event Details:

- What: Read Across Columbia Media Day
- Who: Heart of Missouri United Way and Columbia Public Schools
- When: Thursday, October 29, 2026, at 12:30 a.m.
- Where: Parkade Elementary School, 111 Parkade Blvd, Columbia, MO 65202
- Why: To celebrate literacy and provide new books to elementary students across Columbia

About Heart of Missouri United Way

Since 1946, Heart of Missouri United Way has brought people, resources, and partners together to create lasting, measurable change across Boone, Cooper, and Howard counties. Guided by its mission to positively impact lives by empowering people and organizations through strategic resource investments, the organization mobilizes community action to advance Community Resiliency, Healthy Community, Financial Security, and Youth Opportunity. Through strategic investments, community partnerships, volunteer engagement, and initiatives that connect people to critical resources, Heart of Missouri United Way helps build a stronger, more resilient Heart of Missouri. Learn more at uwheartmo.org.

Media Note:

Media are invited to attend the Parkade Elementary Media Day on October 29 at 12:30 p.m. Opportunities will be available for interviews, photos, and video coverage with CPS administration and representatives from Heart of Missouri United Way.

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