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United Way of
Greater Kansas City

Hold for Release

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United Way of Kansas City Receives the Largest Book Donation in its History with 90,000 Books from Country Inns & Suites By CarlsonSM

(Kansas City, MO)-----If reading a book can change a person's life, then just imagine what 90,000 books can do to help the community. We're about to find out, thanks to an extremely generous donation of books to United Way of Greater Kansas City (UWGKC) by [Country Inns & Suites By Carlson](#), aimed at promoting literacy and life-long learning in the Kansas City area.

Country Inns & Suites, a leading midscale hotel brand that caters to business and leisure travelers, offers a [Read It & Return Lending LibrarySM](#) that invites guests to borrow a book and return it on their next visit and is available at all its locations in the United States and Canada. Country Inns & Suites maintains a diverse book collection that ranges from family titles to non-fiction. A significant surplus of books has been accumulated and is being donated to United Way's Gifts-in-Kind program so they can be shared with clients of nonprofit partner agencies to promote literacy and learning.

"Country Inns & Suites is very proud to be able to donate 90,000 books from our Read It & Return Lending Library to the United Way of Greater Kansas City in support of literacy and the enjoyment of reading in this community," said Aurora Toth, vice president of Marketing for Country Inns & Suites. "We knew from our nearly two decades of experience with the United Way organization that they are the best suited partner for this charitable mission. They have the strongest charitable network in the community to help get the books in the hands of those that would benefit most."

Accepting the donation of books on behalf of United Way was Carol Marinovich, UWGKC's board chair. She thanked the Minneapolis-based company for their generous gift to United Way's Gifts in Kind program, saying the books will have a lasting impact on people in Greater Kansas City. "These books will be going to nonprofit agencies that will use them as tools to help people learn to read, to help spark the imagination and curiosity of children, to provide entertainment for seniors who are isolated and lonely and to help stock the shelves of libraries at alternative schools and community centers around the metro area." Marinovich said, "As a former teacher, I can tell you there is a clear and lasting impact when families encourage reading at home. Show me a young person who reads well and who enjoys reading and I'll show you a student who performs better in school and who has a far better chance of succeeding in life."

The donation of books includes multiple copies of a variety of titles, including fiction, non-fiction, mystery/suspense and self-help books including things like *Moon Over Manhattan*; *Show Boat*; *The Pink Panther*; *Reagan, In His Own Hand*; and *Jack Kennedy/The Education of a State* along with books for children and families such as *White Fang*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Nancy Drew Mysteries*.

United Way has a network of 140 partner agencies whose clients would be in the best position to benefit from the gift of literacy and learning. The nonprofit agencies receiving the books say are excited about having the opportunity to acquire multiple copies of the same book, so they can be used as teaching tools in literacy classes and in book discussion groups. Swope Corridor Renaissance/Upper Room will be among the nonprofit agencies receiving books. The agency's executive director, Jerry McEvoy says, "It gives our

young people involved in classes and book clubs the opportunity to read the same book at once, and then talk about the meaning of the book and what the author was trying to say.”

This donation of books by Country Inns & Suites is by far the largest book donation UWGKC has ever received. Kansas City area nonprofit agencies have an insatiable appetite for books, especially new or gently used children’s books because as Charles W. Elliot said, “Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.” Or perhaps Dr. Seuss said it best, “The more you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

The 90,000 books will be distributed to local nonprofit agencies over the next few weeks at no cost to the agencies other than the cost of gas and the investment of time by staff or volunteers. UWGKC’s Gifts in Kind program accepts donations of new items, including excess inventory or overstocked merchandise which it offers to more than 250 nonprofit agencies in the Kansas City area. Businesses interested in making a donation can call United Way by dialing 2-1-1 or (816) 474-5112 or go to www.unitedwaygkc.org/giftsinkind for additional information. During the past three years, UWGKC’s Gifts in Kind program has received and distributed more than \$7 million worth of donated items.

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