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New Book Club Partnership Aims for Every Child in Polk County to Own a Book Three organizations partnering to make the effort possible

Families were hit hard during the coronavirus outbreak. From lost wages to distance learning, families are looking for ways to survive in the temporary new normal. For some families, this routine includes standing in line at food distribution sites and free lunch lines so their children can eat. For these families and many more, books are not a financial priority. Explorations V Children's Museum, Early Learning Coalition of Polk County, Polk State College, and United Way of Central Florida Success by Six are stepping in to help.

Starting May 1, adults can visit ExplorationsV.com/BookClub to register a child age birth through second grade for a free book. Packages will go out as orders are received at no charge to the family. If you want to support the program, you can also use the website to become a Book Buddy and sponsor a child for as little as \$5 through an online donation.

Reading on your own or being read to is a fundamental learning tool for every child. At childcare facilities, preschools, and elementary classrooms, children are read to daily. With students not attending school on-site, it becomes even more important for every child to have a book of their own in order to build language and fluency. Additionally, each book comes with a resource list on how to use public library resources, access fun virtual programs, and find help if needed.

"As all our children adjust to a different and much less social lifestyle, we hope our community's parents embrace this book club as a way to be fun, exciting and educational! Our children have only one childhood and regardless of the world's worries, deserve everything their parents are willing to provide. After all, they are only children once!" Dr. Marc Hutek, CEO of Early Learning Coalition of Polk County.

The Book Club has no household income requirements meaning any family can participate. Books will be age appropriate, but you will not be able to pick out the book you are sent. All books are approved by the Early Learning Coalition which is Polk County's designated early learning office by the State of Florida's Department of Education.

"This is about literacy and supporting the critical brain development that happens during your youngest years. But it is also about making a child feel special by getting something in the mail during a time they may feel unsure or scared," says Kerry Falwell, CEO of Explorations V Children's Museum.

For more information about Book Club, call (863) 687-3869 or visit www.ExplorationsV.com/BookClub.

About Explorations V Children's Museum

Almost 80% of the human brain is developed by the age of six. Most children who visit the Museum are under the age of six. In addition to the educational exhibits, over 18,000 people participated in an on-site educational program and 87,000 people were impacted through outreach in the 2017-2018 fiscal year alone. In total, 850 families have attended a financial education class and 135 four and five year olds have graduated from Storybook Camp, which raises children living in poverty's chance at succeeding in kindergarten.

Children's Museums are family magnets and Explorations V Children's Museum is no exception. Founded in July 1991 by parent volunteers, Explorations V is located in the heart of historic downtown Lakeland, Florida. It is the only hands-on museum in Polk County dedicated to the education and cultural development of children and families.

Our mission is providing a hands-on, fun-filled adventure in learning for children and families through cultural exhibits, educational programs, and events in the arts & sciences.

This is accomplished via three floors of kid-powered interactive exhibits and programs that celebrate the five senses, hence the "V" in the name. Exhibits & programs are designed with hidden learning concepts complementing Florida Sunshine State Standards for PreK through 5th grade. Art and science are the pathways for many learning concepts, freeing the child's creativity and unleashing the power of play. Explorations V opened in downtown Lakeland in 1991 and purchased the four story historic Kress Building in 1998. A capital campaign ensued and the new Museum debuted in 2000. The Museum partners with schools, colleges, arts & cultural organizations, foundations, government, civic groups, individuals, and corporations like Disney, Publix, United Way, Born Learning, Success by 6 and many others to provide engaging programs.

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