



**American Hospital
Association**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**AHA AWARD OF HONOR TO BE PRESENTED TO
REACH OUT AND READ**

WASHINGTON (April 11, 2013) – The American Hospital Association (AHA) will present its 2013 Award of Honor to Reach Out and Read, Boston, for its efforts to improve children’s literacy and ensure that all children start school ready to read and succeed. The award, presented at the AHA’s Annual Membership Meeting on April 29, is given to organizations and individuals in recognition of exemplary contributions to the health and well-being of people through leadership on major health policies or social initiatives.

Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based, national school readiness initiative that prepares America’s youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with medical providers to prescribe books and encourage families to read together. Physicians, nurse practitioners and other medical professionals incorporate Reach Out and Read into regular pediatric checkups by advising parents about the importance of reading aloud and giving developmentally-appropriate books to children. The program begins at the six-month checkup and continues through age five, with a special emphasis on children growing up in low-income communities.

“A book given to a child and its parents by a health care provider can be the start of a path toward a better, healthier life through a love of learning, the use of imagination and the realization of potential,” said AHA President and CEO Rich Umbdenstock. “Reading to children

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– and encouraging them to read – can also eventually increase health literacy. Pediatricians, nurse practitioners, clinics and hospitals who are working with Reach Out and Read are building healthy communities, starting with our children and their families.”

What distinguishes Reach Out and Read from other interventions is its large and growing evidence base. Since 1991, the Reach Out and Read model has been studied by academic investigators in a variety of settings, providing an extensive body of peer-reviewed research on the effects of the program. At the present, 15 independent, peer-reviewed studies show that Reach Out and Read helps improve parental behavior and attitudes toward reading aloud, as well as language scores of young children who participate.

In 2013, Reach Out and Read’s 12,000 volunteer doctors and nurse practitioners will provide 6.5 million new books to more than 4 million children at 4,946 health care locations in all 50 states. Reach Out and Read was founded at Boston Medical Center in 1989 and its headquarters remain in Boston.

Many local programs are coordinated by hospitals, with books distributed through hospital clinics or physician offices, or in a collaborative effort among the community’s hospitals. The Reach Out and Read program is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners.

George C. Halvorson, chairman and CEO of Kaiser Permanente, Oakland, Calif., also will receive the 2013 AHA Award of Honor.

Previous Award of Honor winners include organizations such as Ronald McDonald House Charities[®], the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare, the Center to Advance Palliative Care, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices and Habitat for Humanity. Individuals such as

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Steven A. Schroeder, M.D., former president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Donald M. Berwick, M.D., former administrator of the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and former president and CEO of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement have also been honored.

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About the AHA

The AHA is a not-for-profit association of health care provider organizations and individuals that are committed to the health improvement of their communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which includes more than 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks, other providers of care and 42,000 individual members. Founded in 1898, the AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends. For more information, visit the AHA Web site at www.aha.org.