



United Way of  
Southwest Missouri  
& Southeast Kansas

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **United Way Children's Book Fair Promotes Summer Reading by Providing Free Books**

*(Pittsburg, KS)* – United Way of Southwest Missouri and Southeast Kansas is partnering with the Pittsburg Family YMCA and Craw-Kan to provide free books for children during the second annual **Read, White & Blue Children's Book Fair** on Saturday, June 10 at the Pittsburg Family YMCA.

The book fair will run from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and is open to children up to third grade as well as parents, grandparents, and caregivers. During the free event, children will be able to select books to take home and keep. The new and gently used books have been donated by community members and processed through United Way.

The book fair is designed to support childhood literacy and encourage summer reading. Research shows that students who are strong readers by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are four times more likely to graduate high school on time. Additionally, more than 60 percent of low-income families do not have any books in their homes for children.

“Our goal is to help children develop a love for reading which paves the way for them to be successful in school and life,” said Bob Burk, Director of Resource Development and Community Engagement for United Way. “That starts with making sure they have access to books.”

Burk added that the timing of the book fair is also important to help students avoid the learning loss children experience during the summer break, known as the “summer slide”.

“We know that reading over the summer helps prevent the summer slide, but many families do not have books at home for their children,” Burk said. “This is a chance to help families start or add books to their in-home libraries.”

More than 200 free books were given out during last year's inaugural book fair and Burk hopes to surpass that number this year.

The book fair will also feature special story times from the Pittsburg Public Library at 10:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., as well as many other fun activities. Burk noted the book fair is a great example of the importance of community partnerships.

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“United Way is grateful to work together with our partners in the community like Craw-Kan, the signature sponsor of the event, as well as the Pittsburg Family Y, Pittsburg Public Library, Pittsburg State University Center for READING, K-State Research and Extension, Crawford County Sheriff's Office, Books & Burrows, Explore Crawford County, and the Pittsburg Walmart,” said Burk.

The book fair is an extension of another United Way of Southwest Missouri and Southeast Kansas literacy initiative, the Little Blue Bookshelf project, which has several locations in Pittsburg and Joplin where children can visit and choose a free book to keep at anytime. For a list of United Way Little Blue Bookshelf locations, visit [www.unitedwaymokan.org/littlebluebookshelfproject](http://www.unitedwaymokan.org/littlebluebookshelfproject).

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**About United Way of Southwest Missouri & Southeast Kansas**

United Way brings people together to build strong communities where everyone thrives. United Way engages the community to identify the underlying causes of the most significant local issues, develops strategies and pulls together financial and human resources to address them, and measures the results. United Way of Southwest Missouri & Southeast Kansas tackles issues based on local needs. Common focus areas include helping children and youth succeed, improving access to health care, promoting financial stability, and strengthening families. For more information about United Way of Southwest Missouri & Southeast Kansas, visit [unitedwaymokan.org](http://unitedwaymokan.org).