

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

COMCAST FOUNDATION AWARDS GRANT TO FRIENDS OF CHILDREN'S  
HOSPITAL FOR THE REACH OUT AND READ PROGRAM

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JACKSON, Miss. – The Comcast Foundation has awarded a \$20,000 grant to Friends of Children's Hospital for the Reach Out and Read (ROR) program at the Blair E. Batson Hospital for Children. The primary goal of ROR is to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care so that children grow up with books and a love of reading.

"The Mississippi Comcast systems are extremely excited that our Foundation funded this grant for the *Reach Out and Read* Program at Children's Hospital. This donation solidifies our long term commitment to Mississippi, as Comcast was founded in Tupelo," said Ronnie Colvin, Vice-President/General Manager for the Comcast Jackson Area.

The grant is part of Comcast's commitment to the communities where its customers and employees live and work. Since its founding in 1999, the Comcast Foundation has distributed more than \$77 million to programs in Comcast communities. "This is not just a grant but an investment in the future of our state" said Sidney Allen, Jr., Director of State Government Affairs for Comcast.

Comcast is a longtime supporter of Friends of Children's Hospital and Batson Hospital. They sponsor the Trustmark Children's Hospital Golf Tournament and An Evening with the Mannings. Comcast also donates airtime and services for commercials encouraging viewers to buy a Batson car tag.

At least 35% of children entering kindergarten today lack the basic language skills they will need to learn to read, and fewer than half of parents in the United States read to their young children daily. Also, parents of children living in poverty may lack the money to buy books, may not have easy access to good children's books, and may not themselves have been read to as children, with the result that millions of children are growing up without books. This grant makes it possible for Batson to purchase and distribute books to children visiting the clinics.

Dr. Susan Buttross, professor of pediatrics and chief of child development, said the ROR program began at Batson by giving books to patients instead of balloons or candy. "The ability for children to read is the ability for them to succeed," Buttross said.

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The University of Mississippi Medical Center, located in Jackson, is the state's only academic medical center. University of Mississippi Health Care represents the clinical programs of the Medical Center and includes University Hospitals and Health System and University Physicians, the faculty group practice. UMMC encompasses five health science

schools, including medicine, nursing, health related professions, dentistry and graduate studies, as well as the site where University of Mississippi pharmacy students do their clinical training. The Medical Center's threefold mission is to educate tomorrow's health-care professionals, conduct innovative research to improve human health, and to provide the highest quality care available to the state's citizens. A major goal of the Medical Center is the improvement of the health of Mississippians and the elimination of health disparities. For more information, contact the Division of Public Affairs at 601-984-1100 or visit us on the Web at <http://info.umc.edu/>.

#### About Batson Hospital

The Blair E. Batson Hospital for Children, part of University of Mississippi Health Care, is located on the campus of the University of Mississippi Medical Center. It is the only hospital in the state devoted exclusively to the care and treatment of sick and injured youngsters. More than 150,000 children from all of the state's 82 counties come to Batson Hospital each year. The spectrum of care ranges from well-child care for healthy newborns to care for cancer, birth defects, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, neurological disorders, pulmonary disease, trauma, allergies, diabetes and numerous other childhood illnesses.

#### About Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read (ROR) is an evidence-based nonprofit organization that promotes early literacy and school readiness in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud. ROR makes literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading. ROR trains doctors and nurses to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud and to give books to children at pediatric checkups from 6 months through 5 years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty. By building on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers, ROR helps families and communities encourage early literacy skills so children enter school prepared for success in reading. The 3.8 million families served annually by ROR read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten with larger vocabularies, with stronger language skills, and better prepared to succeed.

#### About The Comcast Foundation

The Comcast Foundation began in June 1999. Since that time, the Foundation has given more than \$77 million to non-profit organizations serving the same communities we serve nationwide. The Foundation has reached more than 2,000 unique organizations in nearly 1,000 communities. The Foundation provides financial support to organizations that have a strong presence in our communities and match our dedication to expanding digital literacy, promoting community service and building tomorrow's leaders.