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**RAISING A READER AND MASONS OF CALIFORNIA JOIN FORCES
TO BRING LITERACY PROGRAM TO KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN
THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA**

**Masons provide \$1.3 million to fund program in 500 public elementary schools
that will reach more than 10,000 children every year**

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. XX, 2015 – Raising A Reader, a national nonprofit organization that provides resources and programs to help families develop, practice and maintain literacy habits critical for a child’s success, has partnered with the Masons of California to bring the Raising A Reader program to kindergarten classrooms in approximately 500 of the neediest public schools throughout California. The Masons of California have provided \$1.3 million in funding to implement the program and reach some of the most underserved children in the state.

The program will reach more than 10,000 kindergarten children every year, with continued funding from the Masons of California enabling additional schools to be included in the program and expanding the program’s reach even further.

Through the program, each week children bring home a bag filled with award-winning books; the books are exchanged the following week for new ones with more than 100 books rotated through the home during the year. The program also trains parents on engaging their children in reading, and connects families to local libraries to sustain the habit of borrowing and reading books after completion of the program.

“A child’s literacy habits and abilities are formed at an early age and children who are not reading at grade level by third grade have a significantly lower chance of ever catching up,” said Gabrielle Miller, Ed.D., president and CEO of Raising A Reader. “The Masons of California have stepped up to the plate in a big way and because of their funding tens of thousands of California children will be put on a better path in life.”

Raising A Reader’s mission is to engage parents in a routine of book sharing with their children from birth through age eight to foster healthy brain development, healthy relationships, a love of reading, and the literacy skills critical for success in school and life. Research shows a direct and proven relationship between family engagement and the academic growth and development of

children, including social competence and relationships, cognitive development, communication skills, literacy development, vocabulary growth, expressive language and comprehension skills.

“One of our core values is to make a difference in the world and improve the communities in which we live,” said Doug Ismail, executive vice president of the California Masonic Foundation. “Raising A Reader has a proven approach validated by countless studies and evaluations that definitively show their programs are making a huge difference in the lives of children; we are very pleased to be able to support these efforts.”

Masonry is the world’s first and largest fraternal organization. It is a body of knowledge and a system of ethics based on the belief that each man has a responsibility to improve himself while being devoted to his family, faith, country, and fraternity. A man who strives to improve himself can also improve his community and the world at large. This is the mission of the Masons of California. Through Masonic principles and tradition, Masons foster personal growth and improve the lives of others. As Masons, members lead by example, give back to their communities, and support numerous Masonic philanthropies. There are approximately 5 million Masons worldwide, including 2 million in the United States. There are more than 60,000 Masons and about 340 lodges in California. More information is available at FreeMason.org.

Raising A Reader is a 501c3 charitable organization dedicated to helping families develop, practice and maintain literacy habits for children ages 0-8 that are critical for a child’s success in school and in life. The program is evidence-based, with more than 23 independent evaluations showing that Raising A Reader significantly improves language and literacy skills, cognitive development, communication and comprehension skills, school readiness and social competence. Raising A Reader is implemented through a network of community partners that comprise more than 2,500 locations across the country including public school systems, libraries, afterschool programs, community agencies and other organizations both public and private. Headquartered in Redwood City, California, Raising A Reader was founded in 1999 and has served more than 1.25 million families nationwide. More information is available at RaisingAReader.org, @RARnational (Twitter) and [RaisingAReaderNational](https://www.facebook.com/RaisingAReaderNational) (Facebook).

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