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**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY KICK OFF RAHM'S READERS SUMMER
LEARNING CHALLENGE**

*The First Time Ever Introducing An Early Literacy Component For Ages 0-5 Years And Including A
Teen-Specific Reading Program For Ages 14-18*

*Comes on the Heels of Mayor Emanuel and Tonight Show Host Jimmy Fallon's Friendly Wager of 2.4
Million Books to Be Read This Summers*

Mayor Emanuel kicked off the annual Rahm's Readers Summer Learning Challenge today at Chicago Public Library's Douglass Branch. Rahm's Readers is designed to encourage more kids to participate and provide additional activities as opportunities for kids to grow and learn, serving as a cornerstone of the city-wide Summer of Learning initiative. Last year, over 71,000 of Chicago's kids read over 2.1 million books totaling 56 million minutes of reading over last summer.

"Studies show that children lose up to three months of critical learning during the summer months, by expanding and encouraging greater participation in the Rahm's Readers program we are not only bringing more of Chicago's children into the library, but making sure our kids stay engaged, stay learning and start school in the fall even more prepared for success," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "We set high expectations last summer for the kids of Chicago, and we have seen time and again Chicago's kids not only meet the challenge but exceed it, so I have complete faith that the kids of Chicago can top last year's total by reading more than 2.4 million books this summer and have a great time doing it."

Following the success of last year's Rahm's Readers program and the subsequent friendly dare between Mayor Emanuel and Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon, Mayor Emanuel has redoubled his belief in Chicago's kids challenging them to read 2.4 million books this summer, and if reached ensuring Fallon will host the Tonight Show in Chicago for the first time since 1998.

Rahm's Readers Summer Learning Challenge is a free program, funded through the Chicago Public Library Foundation, and meant to keep children engaged in learning over the summer break, to prevent the "summer slide," a documented loss of academic knowledge and skills in kids who don't take part in such summer activities.

Chicago kids will spend the next eight weeks reading, discovering and creating around the theme of animals, habitats and wildlife in this engaging program. Through August 2, kids can “Explore and Roar” as Chicago Public Library teams up with CPS, Chicago Park District, Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo, The Museum of Science and Industry, and The Anti-Cruelty Society for the Summer Learning Challenge.

The Library’s Summer Learning Challenge not only helps build literacy by promoting reading at least 20 minutes a day, but ensures Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) skills are cultivated during the summer months through the specially designed Rahm’s Readers Explorer Guide. Participants are encouraged to read at least 20 minutes a day for a total of 300 minutes or more. Those who complete 300 minutes and other learning activities receive prizes courtesy of the Chicago Public Library Foundation and will be entered to win an e-reader, in addition to earning both Library and City of Learning electronic badges. Fun programs will be held throughout the challenge with the Library’s partner agencies as a part of Chicago City of Learning, www.explorechi.org.

For the first time, the Library is introducing an early literacy component for age 0-5 years. Early readers age 0-5 need to have at least 1,000 stories read aloud to them before they are able to learn to read. Young children are encouraged to read, or be read to, for 20 minutes per day and will receive an age-appropriate activity log. Meant to encourage critical early literacy skills, this is a parent/child piece available in English, Spanish, Mandarin and Polish.

Rahm’s Readers Summer Learning Challenge will also include a teen-specific reading program and summer journal for ages 14-18, encouraging teens to “Make Your Imprint.” Following the animal theme, offers youth the opportunity to earn prizes for reading 600 minutes over the eight weeks, as well as journaling their discoveries through hands-on activities and exploration.

“With the expansion of our Summer Learning Challenge to include both early readers and teenagers, we are offering more ways to close the learning gap over the summer months, and partnering with some of Chicago’s best institutions to make sure this is a dynamic summer program for Chicago youth,” said Library Commissioner Brian Bannon. “We are so grateful to Chicago Public Library Foundation and their donors for making this program possible.”

Summer Learning Challenge “Explore and Roar” materials and more information can be found at local branches and on the Library website at chipublic.org/rahmsreaders.

Rahm’s Readers is made possible by The James & Madeleine McMullan Foundation, Bank of America, Cubs Care fund of the McCormick Foundation, Comcast, Dr. Scholl Foundation, CPL Foundation Junior Board, Helen M. Harrison Foundation, Macys, Peoples Gas, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, ComEd, RR Donnelley, The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust, Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Foundation, Verizon, The Field Foundation of Illinois, The Crown Family, Sarita Warshawsky, and RPM Advertising through the Chicago Public Library Foundation.

Since 1873, the Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL recently received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services and was ranked number one in the U.S. and third in the world by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information, visit chicagopubliclibrary.org or call the Chicago Public Library at (312) 747-4050.

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