

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MY VERY OWN LIBRARY DISTRIBUTES FREE BOOKS TO
14,000 NEWARK STUDENTS ACROSS 21 SCHOOLS**

This year, for the first time, more than half of NPS K-8 Students benefit from the program



From right to left – Kimberly McLain (FNF President and CEO), Lauren Wells (City of Newark Chief Education Officer), Michael Northrop, Clifford the Big Red Dog, Elisha Cooper, and Kevin Sherry

Newark, NJ – December 10, 2014 – Today, at the Quitman Street School, the My Very Own Library initiative, sponsored by Foundation for Newark's Future, hosted its fourth annual kick-off event to set the stage for a year of 14,000 Newark students building their own home libraries. My Very Own Library's continued commitment to Newark is reinforced by the fact that this year the initiative will serve more students and families than ever – over 50-percent of Newark K-8 students. This week, each of those schools is hosting family engagement events to ensure that parents and the school community are a vital part of celebrating literacy in Newark.

At Quitman, and at 20 other Newark public schools, 14,000 students attended a Scholastic Book Fair and chose three free, new books to bring home to build their own home libraries. These same 14,000 children will take part in two additional book fairs in February and June, ultimately bringing home ten free books by the end of the school year. In total, 140,000 books will be distributed to NPS students by the end of the school year. The events are scheduled prior to breaks from school to ensure that children have a print rich environment in their homes.

Today's celebration of students, families, and Quitman faculty was led by Quitman principal Erskine Glover. He was joined by Foundation for Newark's Future President and CEO Kimberly McLain, Scholastic Northeastern Region General Manager Johnny Yotnakparian, along with three children's book authors – **Michael Northrop**, **Kevin Sherry**, and **Elisha Cooper**. City of Newark Chief Education Officer Lauren Wells also attended and delivered greetings from the Mayor's Office.

This marks the fourth consecutive year of My Very Own Library, a research-based literacy and book donation program that places fiction and nonfiction titles directly into the hands of 14,000 Newark school children to help build home libraries and foster the love of reading at home and school. In addition to all 14,000 students receiving 10 free books over the course of the school year, each of the 21 participating Newark Public Schools also play host to literacy-themed family engagement events and author visits throughout the school year.

"This year, My Very Own Library will reach more than half of NPS K-8 students; that's a remarkable feat for what started as a small program," said Kim McLain, CEO of the Foundation for Newark's Future. "Research shows that engaging a child in reading at an early age is a critical component to their success in later years. My Very Own Library is just one of the ways FNF is making an investment in family literacy, and we are proud to partner with Scholastic Book Fairs to make it happen."

My Very Own Library was founded in 2011 by the late Anne Feeley (1954-2012), with additional funding and support from the Foundation for Newark's Future. The official book fair partner of My Very Own Library is Scholastic Book Fairs, which gives students the opportunity to take advantage of special Scholastic Book Fairs at no cost.

The 21 schools selected for today's program included:

13th Avenue School
Abington Avenue
Belmont-Runyon

BRICK Avon
Camden Street School
Chancellor Avenue

Cleveland Elementary
Elliot Street School
George Washington

Carver
Hawthorne Avenue
Ivy Hill Elementary
Louise A. Spencer
Luis Munoz Marin

McKinley School
Miller Street
Oliver Street School
BRICK Peshine Avenue
Quitman Street

Ridge Street
South 17th Street
Sussex Avenue

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