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MAYOR BOOKER AND NPS SUPERINTENDENT ANDERSON JOIN FOUNDATION FOR NEWARK'S FUTURE CEO GREG TAYLOR TO LAUNCH "MY VERY OWN LIBRARY"

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Pilot Program Provides Students with Access to High Quality Books and the Beginning of a Personal Library

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Thousands of Newark Elementary School Students Choose Ten Books Each This Year

November 21, 2011 (Newark, NJ) - The Foundation for Newark's Future (FNF) today announced the launch of "My Very Own Library," a literacy and book donation program that seeks to place literature directly into the hands of Newark school children and foster a love of reading outside of school. FNF committed \$176,000 to the initiative while Anne Feeley, My Very Own Library's founder who attended grade school in Newark, committed \$125,000. The program is also made possible by a partnership with Newark Public Schools and two education nonprofit organizations, NJ After 3 and First Book.

"My Very Own Library" will provide Newark elementary school students with the foundation of a home library and encourage a lifelong love of reading as part of broader efforts to promote better educational outcomes throughout Newark's public schools. Under the pilot program, roughly 5,200 students at eight NPS elementary schools will each receive ten books of their choosing this school year from a broad selection of titles approved by their school administrators. FNF CEO Gregory Taylor kicked off the program today at Ridge Street Elementary School in Newark's North Ward with Mayor Cory Booker, Superintendent Cami Anderson. Representatives from NJ After 3 President and CEO Mark Valli and First Book Senior Director Erica S. Perl.

"We are putting the future directly into the hands of students with My Very Own Library," said **FNF CEO Greg Taylor**. "The Foundation for Newark's Future recognizes the critical role literacy plays in improving education and we are thrilled to fund programs that address early childhood literacy in particular. This program is an efficient and effective way to

encourage a lifelong love of reading, and if successful, is a concept we can scale across many more schools."

"The My Very Own Library project is a part of a series of unprecedented education investments that are fueling innovation and achievement across the city of Newark," said Newark Mayor Cory Booker. "This effort brings us one step closer to ensuring that all Newark students have the educational opportunities they deserve."

First Book, a non-profit book supplier serving educational programs and schools in lower income communities, will deliver the nearly 60,000 books to participating elementary schools in three installments over the course of the school year. NJ After 3, a nonprofit organization dedicated to expanding and improving afterschool opportunities for New Jersey students, will administer the program. Schools will host a book fair for each distribution, which will include motivational reading events and guests readers. During each the three book fair events, students will select three books of their choice along with an additional summer reading book at the end of the school year.

"Early success in reading is one of the key drivers of raising overall student achievement," said NPS Superintendent Cami Anderson. "This process of self-directed book selection that draws on guidance from the literacy experts at MVOL and inspiration from community volunteers is a powerful support of the work at Newark Public Schools."

The eight pilot schools are 13th Avenue School, Abington Avenue School, Alexander Street School, Brick Avon Academy, Belmont Runyon, Louise A. Spencer School, Oliver Street School and Ridge Street Elementary School. Pilot schools were selected based on a demonstrated need for literacy resources combined with the interest and logistical ability to administer the program effectively at this time.

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About the Foundation for Newark's Future

The Foundation for Newark's Future (FNF) is a non-profit 501C3 foundation dedicated to improving Newark's public education system. FNF was founded in the fall of 2010 with the mission of funding comprehensive education reforms that will improve the quality of education received by all of Newark's children. For more information, please visit: www.foundationfornewarksfuture.org.