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**United Way of Essex
and West Hudson**

**UNITED WAY OF ESSEX AND WEST HUDSON TO ADD LITERACY INITIATIVE
MY VERY OWN LIBRARY TO LIST OF PROGRAMS**

Newark, NJ – December 10, 2015 –United Way of Essex and West Hudson County (UWEWH) and Scholastic Book Fairs, a division of Scholastic, the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, celebrated the addition of the “My Very Own Library (MVOL)” reading initiative to its list of programs being offered to students of the city of Newark. This partnership was officially announced today at the Oliver Street Elementary School Book Fair in Newark, N.J.

Since 2011, MVOL has been sponsored and hosted by the Foundation for Newark’s Future (FNF). To date, My Very Own Library has provided more than 500,000 books to students in Newark, serving more than 50% of Newark’s K–8 students. This year, the program will support twenty-three schools in Newark, serving over 15,000 students with 150,000 books.

“At United Way, it's imperative that we address the root causes of concern that our communities face and align resources that allow our families to become independent and strong,” said **Catherine Wilson, Acting Chief Executive Officer of UWEWH**. “My Very Own Library arms children who might not have access otherwise to a broad selection of books and allows them to build their own home libraries and reinforce the importance of reading at home with their families.”

MVOL is a literacy and book donation program that seeks to place literature directly into the hands of low-income students by building home libraries. MVOL allows students the opportunity to choose 10 new, free books over the course of three unique book fairs throughout the school year. My Very Own Library is unlike other book distribution programs because it incorporates the critical component of choice, parental engagement and school partnerships. According to the latest Kids & Family Reading Report, 90% of kids ages 6 to 17 say they are more likely to finish a

book they have picked out themselves. These book fairs take place before holidays and the summer break in order to implement the practice of children reading at home with their families.

“We are so proud to have been a part of MVOL for the past five years in Newark, and excited that the United Way has stepped up to give the initiative a new home,” said **Kimberly McLain, President & CEO of FNF**. “We firmly believe that the culture of literacy FNF and MVOL have helped create will have a lasting impact on the future success of Newark’s students.”

“At Scholastic, we know how critically important it is for all children to be able to choose the books they want to read and to have access to a broad selection of the very best children’s books in order to encourage more independent reading,” said **Alan Boyko, President of Scholastic Book Fairs**. “By working with literacy programs like My Very Own Library and organizations like United Way of Essex and West Hudson County, Scholastic is able to ensure that more children are given the chance to become book owners, build their own home libraries and discover the power and joy of reading.”

For additional information on My Very Own Library, please visit www.myveryownlibrary.org or the United Way of Essex and West Hudson.

About the United Way of Essex and West Hudson

Founded in 1923, United Way of Essex and West Hudson is a non-profit organization that seeks to address the root causes of community concerns by aligning resources to best meet the needs of individuals, children and families through its service area annually. We serve a population of nearly 700,000 in thirteen communities in Essex and Hudson County.

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