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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **VTech® to Donate 10,000 Books for Kids in Need with First Book®**

### **September is National Literacy Month**

CHICAGO – (September 9, 2010) – The latest statistics on kids and books are shocking. In low-income neighborhoods, there is an average of just one book for every 300 children. And 80 percent of preschools and afterschool programs serving kids ages 3-7 have no age-appropriate books for their children.<sup>1</sup>

Compare that to middle-income neighborhoods, where each *child* has an average of 13 books.<sup>2</sup>

There is no better time to shed a spotlight on this issue than now – National Literacy Month. And, there is no better way to help combat the issue than providing new, age-appropriate books to kids in need.

VTech ([www.vtechkids.com](http://www.vtechkids.com)) and First Book ([www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org)) have partnered to donate 10,000 new books to children in low-income communities. And it's just the beginning. VTech will also be giving others the opportunity to help make a difference through a "Buy a Book, Give a Book" campaign kicking-off later in the year in time for the holiday giving season.

One of the most important factors affecting literacy is early access to books. According to recent research, children who are read to regularly by the age of two display greater language comprehension, larger vocabularies, and higher cognitive skills than their peers.<sup>3</sup> As they get older, reading is the very skill kids need most to succeed in school. Yet, the reality is that for families struggling to make ends meet in these difficult economic times, books and reading may be their last priorities.

"We are delighted to partner with VTech in our shared goal of providing children with the resources to become lifelong readers. This support will allow First Book to further its mission and provide 10,000 new books to children in need said," said Kyle Zimmer, First Book president and CEO.

As the creator of the Electronic Learning Products category, VTech has been making age-appropriate educational products for children since 1976 and leading the way in developing products that foster electronic reading skills.

"VTech is thrilled to give kids the opportunity to choose books and take pride in owning books so that they will want to read and learn," said Tom McClure, director of marketing, VTech Electronics North America, LLC. "Research shows that children with books at home are eight times more likely to list reading as one of their favorite activities.<sup>4</sup> Together with First Book, we hope people everywhere will join us in our mission so that one day no child will be without a book to read."

In addition to the First Book donation, VTech has introduced its new V.Reader interactive e-reading system. Designed so that kids will love learning to read, the V.Reader offers a new type of reading platform that is the next generation of handheld learning products. Most recently, VTech has launched the Learning Lodge online bookstore, where parents can download new books and reading games for their child's V.Reader from a library that is constantly being refreshed with new content.

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<sup>1</sup> Neuman, Susan B., et al. Access for All: Closing the Book Gap for Children in Early Education. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2001, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Neuman, Susan B. and David K. Dickinson, ed. Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2. New York, NY: 2006, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Raikes, H., Pan, B.A., Luze, G.J., Tamis-LeMonda, C.S., Brooks-Gunn, J., Constantine, J., Tarullo, L.B., Raikes, H.A., Rodriguez, E. (2006). "Mother-child book reading in low-income families: Correlates and outcomes during the first three years of life." Child Development, 77(4).

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Family Literacy, Research Facts and Figures, 2000.)

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Parents need to inspire their children to read, according to early childhood language and reading expert and VTech advisory council member Deborah Libby, PhD. Dr. Libby has tips for parents to get kids excited about reading, including asking your child to make predictions about what they are reading to heighten anticipating and talking about the story after reading to enhance comprehension.

“Reading with your child is the most important educational tradition you can create,” said Dr. Libby. “By creating regular and fun reading experiences for kids, you can effectively hook kids on books at an early age and help shape their development for the future.”

Other ways Dr. Libby suggests getting kids hooked on books, include:

- **Encourage children to make predictions while reading.** Ask kids to look at the pictures and title of the book and share what they think the story may be about. Also encourage them to take a “picture walk” through the book. A picture walk is simply taking some time to flip through the pages of the book and look at the pictures.
  - Making predictions helps readers approach reading experiences with expectations and as they read they can see if those expectations were correct.
- **Encourage children to write regularly.** Writing plays an important role in children’s reading development helping them think about letters, sounds and words. There are many ways to encourage writing. Go outside with some sidewalk chalk and have them write their name or label items like “leaf” or “tree.” Encourage them to start a journal by writing about their day to help spark that desire to write.
- **Harness digital learning products.** Kids are increasingly “plugged in,” and whether parents like it or not, it’s helping to prepare children for the digital age into which they are growing up. A way to make sure their “screen time” is productive is to provide them with age-appropriate devices that integrate learning AND fun.

### **About First Book**

First Book provides new books to children in need, addressing one of the most important factors affecting literacy – access to books. An innovative leader in social enterprise, First Book has distributed more than 70 million free and low-cost books in thousands of communities. First Book has offices in the U.S. and Canada. For more information about the nonprofit First Book, please visit [www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org).

### **ABOUT VTECH**

VTech, the creator of the Electronic Learning Products (ELP) category and the award-winning V.Smile TV Learning System, is a world leader of age-appropriate learning toys. Since 1980, VTech has been developing high-quality, innovative educational products that enrich children’s development, from birth to preteen, through fun and smart play.

VTech Electronics North America, LLC is based in Arlington Heights, Ill. VTech Electronics Ltd. is headquartered in Hong Kong with distribution throughout North America, Europe and Asia.

For more information on VTech’s additional product lines, visit [www.vtechkids.com](http://www.vtechkids.com), [www.vtechkids.com/download](http://www.vtechkids.com/download) and [www.vtechkids.com/v.reader](http://www.vtechkids.com/v.reader) on the Web, [www.facebook.com/VTechToys](https://www.facebook.com/VTechToys) on Facebook or follow [@VTechToys](https://twitter.com/VTechToys) on Twitter.

*Journalists’ Note: To learn more about the donation or interview Tom McClure of VTech or Kyle Zimmer of First Book, please contact Andrew Sroufe at 312-397-6073 or [andrew.sroufe@ogilvypr.com](mailto:andrew.sroufe@ogilvypr.com).*