Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation Continues Partnership with Sesame Workshop to Expand Early Literacy Initiative for Young Children

NEW YORK, April 7, 2017 – The Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation (IICF) announces an extended contribution to children’s literacy as schools, libraries and families across the U.S. and UK prepare to mark numerous national literacy initiatives. In partnership with Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street, a renewed multimedia campaign will build upon IICF’s commitment to early literacy by highlighting the critical role of reading with children at an early age.

This effort was conceived as part of IICF’s ongoing Early Literacy Initiative, a project created in 2013 to apply the strength of IICF’s industry-wide network of insurance professionals and desire to unite in service to help close the literacy gap by delivering free, research-based literacy resources to local communities. The Early Literacy Initiative and its various charitable endeavors are made possible through generous support from an IICF grant that is funded primarily from proceeds generated by its Women in Insurance Global Conference. The IICF Women in Insurance Global Conference will take place June 7-9, 2017 in New York City.

Continuing with the success of the initial partnership, IICF and Sesame Workshop committed to renew their partnership in the beginning of 2017, with content currently in development for introduction in the fall. The program will consist of a bilingual (English/Spanish) multimedia campaign that provides tools to support the importance of early literacy. All of the materials will be available beginning in October for IICF’s annual Week of Giving. Components will include:

- 100,000 printed storybooks featuring lovable Sesame Street friends to be distributed to a range of children’s organizations and charities
- A free online course designed for IICF’s volunteers and early childhood educators to increase capacity building and knowledge for early childhood professionals around early literacy and family engagement
- A live and recorded webinar designed specifically for IICF volunteers to provide guidance on using new and existing materials in various volunteer settings
- Continued distribution of Every Day is a Reading and Writing Day materials

A wealth of research shows six out of every 10 preschoolers arrive at kindergarten without the necessary skills to begin a successful lifetime of learning, which impacts their long-term academic success. One of the strongest factors influencing a child’s early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school. Yet in under-resourced communities the ratio of books to children is about one book for every 300 children. In more highly resourced communities, the ratio is 13 books per child.
“Childhood literacy has a significant and long-lasting impact on our society,” noted William E. Ross, Chief Executive Officer of IICF. “We’re proud to partner with Sesame Workshop and provide our industry colleagues a means to focus their good works toward an issue of such importance.”

In 2013, IICF and Sesame Workshop launched Every Day is a Reading and Writing Day – a free, multimedia and bilingual early literacy program that provides parents, caregivers and facilitators with essential tools to support young children’s development of literary skills around rich conversations, reading and writing. The program targets low income communities within IICF’s four regional divisions of the United States and one international division in the United Kingdom. Each IICF division has designated several local nonprofit partners focused upon early childhood literacy, hosting events where industry volunteers utilize materials from the program. The next phase of the partnership will empower volunteers, educators and parents to mobilize even further around this important cause.

“As the literacy level gap among young children continues to grow, highlighting the importance of reading together is critical for developing a foundation for language and literacy skills,” said Sherrie Westin, Executive Vice President, Global Impact and Philanthropy at Sesame Workshop. “With this initiative, we are confident that our continued partnership with IICF will strengthen our meaningful impact in under-resourced communities.”

About the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation
The Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation (IICF) is a unique nonprofit that unites the collective strengths of the insurance industry to help communities and enrich lives through grants, volunteer service and leadership. Established in 1994, IICF has contributed $25.3 million in community grants, along with more than 240,500 volunteer hours, to hundreds of charities and nonprofit organizations, reinvesting in local communities where funds are raised. IICF is a registered nonprofit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Learn more at www.iicf.org.

Donations can be made to the Early Literacy Initiative via the IICF website or by linking through to https://app.etapstry.com/onlineforms/InsuranceIndustryCharitable/literacy.html. For additional information, please contact Betsy Myatt at emyatt@iicf.com.

About Sesame Workshop
Sesame Workshop is the nonprofit media and educational organization behind Sesame Street, the pioneering television show that has been reaching and teaching children since 1969. Today, Sesame Workshop is an innovative force for change, with a mission to help kids everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. We’re active in more than 150 countries, serving vulnerable children through a wide range of media, formal education, and philanthropically-funded social impact programs, each grounded in rigorous research and tailored to the needs and cultures of the communities we serve. For more information, please visit sesameworkshop.org.