

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Read Across Oklahoma Returns with a Free Book Giveaway and Online Entertainment and Activities

Read Across Oklahoma, the state's premiere literary event for preschool and early grade children, returns on Tuesday, April 13 at 9:00 a.m. with a free book giveaway and virtual activities. The first 1,500 children who visit the Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden on that day will receive a free book. Following their Zoo visit, participants can visit the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL) website at libraries.ok.gov/read to enjoy a special video of Tammi Sauer reading the event's featured book, *Wordy Birdy*, performances by popular children's musical group Spaghetti Eddie, additional storytelling, and more. The video also provides a virtual look at the OKC Zoo and some of its animals and habitats.

Read Across Oklahoma is part of the statewide *My First Library* program coordinated by ODL, an early literacy initiative that helps develop literacy skills and promotes family reading. During a regular school year, the program distributes 1,900 books to early learning classrooms in the Oklahoma City metro area.

"Children who are exposed to books and have books to call their own at an early age develop better vocabularies and are better prepared for school," according to Leslie Gelders, ODL Literacy Coordinator. "Getting books into the hands of young children is so important, so we were excited to partner with the Zoo to give more books away."

"The Zoo is thrilled to be part of this year's virtual Read Across Oklahoma celebration and host a book giveaway, providing guests with new books for their young readers to take home," said Candice Rennels, OKC Zoo's director of public relations.

Wordy Birdy, by award-winning Edmond author Tammi Sauer, is an ideal feature book for the event, Gelders said. "Since the character Wordy Birdy is always talking, it's filled with new vocabulary words. It also imparts a lesson about the importance of listening."

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The virtual side of the event will provide opportunities for children throughout the state to participate, Gelders said. “The video is available directly from ODL’s website, and we also have a variety of exercises including a maze, a coloring page, and learning activities and games related to *Wordy Birdy*.”

Visit libraries.ok.gov/read to find the virtual activities. Families planning a visit to the Zoo should make their reservations at www.okc Zoo.org/tickets.

Additional Read Across Oklahoma sponsors include the Krueger Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Pizza Hut, Target, Oklahoma City Public Schools, Teacher Prep Academy, Red Wolves, Metro Technology Center, Feed the Children, and Junior League of Oklahoma City.

For more information about Read Across Oklahoma, contact leslie.gelders@libraries.ok.gov or call 405-522-3242.

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The **Oklahoma Department of Libraries** is the official State Library of Oklahoma. It serves the information and records management needs of state government, assists with public library development, coordinates library and information technology projects for the state, and serves the general public through its specialized collections. For information on the Oklahoma Literacy Resource Office in the Department of Libraries, visit libraries.ok.gov/literacy.

The **Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden** is located at the crossroads of I-44 and I-35. The Zoo is a proud member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the American Alliance of Museums, Oklahoma City’s Adventure District and an Adventure Road partner. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Regular admission is \$11 for adults and \$8 for children ages 3-11 and seniors ages 65 and over. Children two and under are admitted free. Visit okc Zoo.org for more information.

Tammi Sauer is a children's book author who also presents at schools and conferences across the nation. In addition to winning awards, her books have gone on to do great things. *Mostly Monsterly* was selected for the Cheerios Spoonfuls of Stories program. *Your Alien*, an NPR Best Book of the Year, was recently released in Italian, French, Korean, and Spanish. And *Nugget & Fang* was developed into a musical that has been performed in over 60 venues across the country. Visit her online at tammissauer.com.

Brendan Parker and Erick Alexander make up the musical duo known as **Spaghetti Eddie!** The topics of their family friendly songs include colors, outer space, friendship, animals, diversity, days of the week, bugs, trains, robots, dinosaurs, and, of course, spaghetti! Their songs have little ones moving, learning, singing, and most importantly, having fun!