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OREGON BUSINESSES LEAD CHARGE TO SUPPORT EDUCATION
On heels of Business Plan Summit, businesses announce major support for SMART

PORTLAND, Ore. – When hundreds of business leaders joined together for the Oregon Business Plan Summit, Jan. 9, a common theme emerged – strengthening public education is crucial to ensure the success of Oregon’s economic future. Now more than ever, government and business leaders across the state realize the critical need to support schools and improve education.

A few shining stars have already stepped up to lead the charge and support statewide educational initiatives by creating the Start Making A Reader Today (SMART) Business Challenge. The JELD-WEN Foundation, Les Schwab, U.S. Bank, and the Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation have each pledged at least \$150,000 (\$50,000 a year for three years) and Columbia Sportswear and PacTrust have each pledged at least \$75,000 (\$25,000 a year for three years) to help create the challenge.

Thanks to these challenge pledges, all business gifts will be matched dollar for dollar, doubling the impact a business can make for children in their communities.

Since 1992, SMART has served 90,000 children, donated 1.3 million books and coordinated 2.1 million volunteer hours at schools throughout the state. Independent research shows that students make significant gains in reading progress as a result of SMART.

“U.S. Bank is proud to serve as a SMART Business Challenge partner,” said Malia Wasson, president of U.S. Bank - Oregon. “Our pledge is important for Oregon’s kids – and for our business. Today’s school children are tomorrow’s workforce. Now, more than ever, it is essential that businesses invest in the lives of the children in their community.”

Experts from organizations such as the Chalkboard Project, an initiative that inspires Oregonians to do what it takes to make the state’s K-12 public schools among the nation’s best, say that SMART is a perfect example of how a private-public partnerships can work successfully.

“For Weyerhaeuser, good citizenship means helping to build strong, healthy communities,” said Rich Hanson, Weyerhaeuser’s chief operating officer and Oregon native, “and reading is fundamental to the health and future of a community. We see SMART as a choice investment for Weyerhaeuser as an employer and as a good corporate citizen.”

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About SMART

SMART gives thousands of Oregon children the one-on-one support they need to learn to read and build brighter futures.

SMART delivers the two things K-3 students need most to learn to read: adult attention and books. Volunteers read with two children for one hour a week in public elementary schools, and the children receive two books each month to keep and read with their families. It's a simple approach that makes a world of difference.

To learn more about SMART, visit www.getsmartoregon.org or call 1-877-598-4633.

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