



**CITY OF
COLUMBIA**



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City of Columbia and Richland County Partner for "One Book, One Columbia" Program

Richland County has joined the City of Columbia's efforts to invite area book lovers to serve as Reading Advocates in the 2012 One Book, One Columbia program.

"Last year's program was a huge success and I am thrilled to see that, with this new partnership, we are well on our way to making this year's bigger and better," Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin said. "I am truly excited about this wonderful opportunity to bring people together and celebrate the Midlands as a region of readers."

Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin and City Councilwoman Dr. Belinda Gergel kicked off the 2012 initiative last week and responses from the community have been positive. "We're building on past success and gearing up for the 2012 One Book program now. The Reading Advocates serve as special ambassadors who help link residents and groups from throughout the area to the One Book program," Gergel stated.

Richland County Councilman Seth Rose presented a resolution to County Council members, during their meeting held on Tuesday, November 15, 2011, and it was approved by a unanimous vote. "I am pleased to have Richland County take part in the One Book, One Columbia program. Literacy is a foundation for success and this program not only promotes reading but also brings our community together. I look forward to seeing everyone at the program kickoff in December," Rose commented.

Scheduled for early 2012, Columbia's One Book initiative provides a community reading experience for area residents who read the same book at the same time and then meet for discussion and dialogue. A type of community-wide book club, it is modeled after similar programs across the country.

This past year's inaugural program which drew several thousand participating readers, was co-sponsored with the Richland County Public Library and the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods and involved numerous community groups and book clubs across the Midlands. Richland County Council Chairman Paul Livingston said, "Richland County is proud to partner with the City of Columbia to promote literacy. The One Book, One Columbia program is an innovative way to get citizens of all ages involved in the joy of reading."

Reading Advocates commit to reading the book, encourage friends and associates to join in on the read and attend at least one of the special events associated with the program. Reading Advocates will be invited to an orientation reception at the Richland County Public Library on December 13, 2011 at 5:00 p.m. At that time, the 2012 One Book, One Columbia selection will be announced along with other key program events.

"Our community is filled with residents who appreciate the powerful role of reading in transforming and enhancing the human experience and that was supported by Columbia's designation as one of Amazon's 'Top 20 Most Well Read Cities' in 2011," Gergel commented.

For more information and to register as a Reading Advocate by December 5, 2011, contact Councilwoman Dr. Belinda Gergel at bfgergel@columbiasc.net.

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