



## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Reading Advocates Urged to Join "One Book, One Columbia" Program**

Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin and City Councilwoman Dr. Belinda Gergel invite area book lovers to serve as Reading Advocates in the 2012 "One Book, One Columbia" program. Register today to become a 2012 Reading Advocate by contacting Dr. Gergel at [bfgergel@columbiasc.net](mailto:bfgergel@columbiasc.net). Citizens are urged to register before next week's special reception for all Reading Advocates.

"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."

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. This year the City of Columbia is proud to announce that Richland County has joined this effort as a community partner.

"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.

Reading Advocates commit to read the book, encourage friends and associates to join in the read, and attend at least one of the special events associated with the program. "We're looking for people who appreciate the power of a good book to inform the human experience," Gergel emphasized.

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,” Richland County Councilman Set Rose stated. “I look forward to seeing everyone at the program kickoff in December,” Rose added.

Reading Advocates will be invited to an orientation reception at the Richland County Public Library on December 13, 2011 at 5:00 PM. 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