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For immediate release July 8, 2021

New Little Free Library Established by Cobb Collaborative Partners at Legion Park in Austell, GA

COBB COUNTY, GA: Two out of three children living in poverty have no books to call their own.

One of the most successful ways to improve the reading achievement of children is to **increase access to books**, especially at home and in their native language. Cobb Collaborative is dedicated to the process of making that happen. In partnership with Cobb County School Psychological Services Department, the Collaborative is leading an initiative to increase access to books in Cobb through Little Free Lending Libraries. The Little Free Library (LFL) is a nonprofit dedicated to putting books in the hands of children and adults in communities around the world. The book-sharing boxes play an essential role by providing access and encouraging a love of reading. They operate under the "Take One, Leave One" theory.

As the local point of contact for the Get Georgia Reading Campaign, the Cobb Collaborative works to improve 3rd grade reading levels in Cobb County. Data reveals that children who read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to graduate from high school—paving the way to higher education, better employment opportunities, and improved health outcomes. In partnership with these efforts, the Cobb County School Psychologists department supports the learning, development, and well-being of all students.

With a goal of installing 21 libraries in 2021, the Collaborative's fifth LFL was dedicated on July 7, 2021 at Legion Park in Austell, GA. Austell Mayor Ollie Clemons was present to dedicate the library, in addition to the Austell fire, police, and parks and recreation departments.

More libraries are in progress for installations across the county. This is a quintessential collaborative effort, made possible by additional partners including the United Way of Greater Atlanta Northwest Region funding LFLs in Austell and Marietta, and Girl Scout troops and Eagle Scouts building LFLs as well.

"We are beyond thrilled to serve as the local point of contact for the Get Georgia Reading Campaign and to build a partnership of engaged stakeholders in order to move the needle on

access to reading materials in our community. There is a direct link between reading skills and high school graduation rates, which of course leads directly to employment opportunities, economic stability and ultimately, the health of our communities,” stated Irene Barton, Executive Director of the Cobb Collaborative. “It’s not an exaggeration to note that proficient readers become engaged citizens,” she added.

During the dedication, the fire department team read to the children in attendance, demonstrating by example the importance of and imagination in reading.

For more information about the Little Free Library program, contact Irene Barton, Executive Director, at ibarton@cobbcollaborative.org

Cobb Collaborative is a nonprofit organization in Cobb County seeking to improve outcomes for children and families. To learn more, visit our website at www.cobbcollaborative.org

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