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**HCA Houston Healthcare and Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation Launch
Raising a Reader Initiative**

*Groundbreaking pilot program to impact 920 Houston-area babies and
their caregivers*

Houston, Texas (November 7, 2023) – HCA Houston Healthcare and The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation are pleased to announce Raising a Reader, a pilot program aimed at giving more babies a strong and healthy start. Recognizing the pivotal role of parents and caregivers as their child's first teachers, this innovative initiative aims to provide families with the tools they need to support their child's growth, promoting early literacy, healthy brain development, and a strong foundation for infants.

"We are absolutely thrilled to partner with the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation to launch the Raising a Reader program. This groundbreaking initiative underscores our commitment to nurturing early childhood development, empowering new mothers, and enhancing the overall well-being of our community," said Megan Marietta, CEO of HCA Houston Healthcare West.

"The early years of life are a critical period of development when the human brain doubles in size during the first year and reaches 90% of its adult size by the age of five," said Dr. Julie Baker Finck, President & CEO, Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation. "Healthcare providers are trusted sources of information for families, especially as they navigate how to best care for their child during the first few years of life. While a pilot project right now, we are committed to scaling up this initiative as quickly as possible, because we know how vital it is to educate and empower parents to be their child's first teachers."

The Raising a Reader program will launch in November coinciding with National Family Literacy Awareness Month, and will run through the holiday season, concluding at the end of the calendar year. HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake and HCA Houston Healthcare West will pilot this initiative serving 920 families and their newborns. The resources for the program have been made possible through the generous support of the Young Professionals Group of the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation.

"As we approach National Family Literacy Awareness Month, this initiative is not just a significant milestone but a profound commitment to ensuring that the children in our community have the best possible start in life," said Todd Caliva, CEO at HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake. "We believe that by nurturing early literacy and fostering healthy brain development in our community's youngest members,

we're sowing the seeds for a brighter future for our next generation. We look forward to the positive impact this initiative will have on our community and we're excited to see the positive changes it will bring for the families we serve."

New mothers participating in the program will receive a Raising a Reader bag, which includes an indestructible book, a letter, and informative resources with suggested activities for fostering healthy brain development and early literacy. They will also receive a list of 100 recommended books to read with their infants, a library card for the Harris County Public Library system, and a prescription to read to their baby for at least 15 minutes every day.

HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake and HCA Houston Healthcare West will actively support and educate parents about the program by displaying customized Raising a Reader content on closed-circuit monitors in labor and delivery rooms. This content will provide fast facts about the importance of early literacy, tips for parents on supporting early literacy success and healthy brain development and guidance on what children should know and be able to do by the age of two.

Moreover, physicians, nurses, and other hospital staff will consult with new mothers about the Raising a Reader resources before they are discharged, ensuring they are fully equipped to embark on their journey toward building a strong foundation for their child's future.

Following the pilot project, the program will be evaluated based on feedback from participating HCA Houston Healthcare hospital staff and the parents served. With anticipated further investments, the Raising a Reader initiative aims to expand its reach to more families and integrate it throughout the HCA Houston Healthcare system in 2024 and beyond.

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About HCA Houston Healthcare

HCA Houston Healthcare is the leading provider of healthcare in the Greater Houston area, treating nearly a million patients annually. With an employee base of 15,000, HCA Houston Healthcare's comprehensive network includes 14 hospitals, 11 ambulatory surgery centers, 14 freestanding emergency centers, 19 CareNow® urgent care centers and numerous freestanding diagnostic imaging facilities. The system also includes a regional transfer center that provides support for patient transfers into and out of HCA Houston Healthcare facilities as well as access to ground and air transportation within a 150-mile radius. As one of the region's largest healthcare systems, HCA Houston Healthcare recognizes the importance of giving back to the communities we serve. A strong advocate for the next generation of healthcare professionals, HCA Houston Healthcare also is a major supporter of the University of Houston College of Nursing and the University of Houston College of Medicine. For more information, visit [HCAhoustonhealthcare.com](https://www.hcahoustonhealthcare.com).

About HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake

HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake is a 532-bed, full-service hospital offering inpatient and outpatient medical, surgical and specialty services to Houston's growing Bay Area. Founded in 1972, the campus includes a Level II trauma center, [neuroscience institute](#), [dedicated heart hospital](#), [comprehensive women's services](#) including high-risk obstetrical care, a Level III neonatal ICU, a pediatric emergency department and the area's only pediatric ICU. HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake is also a comprehensive stroke center and an accredited chest pain center. The hospital has also achieved the prestigious Commission on Cancer's designation as a [Comprehensive Cancer Center](#) and is a Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program (MBSAQIP) [Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence](#). HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake is nationally recognized for earning an "A" from

the Leapfrog Group Hospital Safety Grade in Spring 2023 and Fall 2022 and has been recognized by multiple organizations as a top place to work. For more information, visit HCAhoustonhealthcare.com/clear-lake.

About HCA Houston Healthcare West

HCA Houston Healthcare West is a full-service acute care hospital providing comprehensive healthcare services to West Houston and surrounding communities since 1985. The facility is a Joint Commission Certified Primary Stroke Center. Accredited in chest pain, HCA Houston Healthcare West offers an extensive range of [cardiovascular services](#) at its three-story cardiac and critical care tower. The [Sugar Land Cancer Center and the Sugar Land Diagnostic Center](#) are freestanding departments of HCA Houston Healthcare West that offer the latest cancer treatments and diagnostic imaging options for patients. The women's services department provides a full range of gynecological and maternity services including a designated Level II NICU and is a 2019-2022 recipient of the Healthgrades Obstetrics and Gynecology, Labor and Delivery Excellence Awards™ and Gynecologic Surgery Excellence Award™ 2022. HCA Houston Healthcare West is also a recipient of the Healthgrades America's 250 Best Hospitals Award™ 2022. Additional services include complex neurosurgery, minimally-invasive surgery and sleep disorder studies. For more information, visit HCAhoustonhealthcare.com/west.

About the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation

The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation is a charitable organization formed by Neil and Maria Bush to carry forth First Lady Barbara Bush's legacy in the literacy cause and to focus deeply on breaking the intergenerational cycle of low literacy in the Bush family's hometown. Founded on Mrs. Bush's belief, "If you help a person to read, then their opportunities in life will be endless," the Barbara Bush Foundation's mission is to improve lives through the power of literacy. Over the past 10 years, the Foundation has spearheaded innovative literacy programs and expanded access to high-quality services and resources that empower children, families, and adults with the support they need to learn how to read, write, and comprehend. For more information, visit www.barbarabushhouston.org or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/bushhoustonliteracy on Twitter @bushhoustonlit and on Instagram @bushhoustonlit.