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Media Contacts:

Marsha Buchanan
HCA Houston Healthcare
346-229-8627 (cell)
marsha.buchanan@hcahealthcare.com

Christie Garella
Dancie Perugini Ware Public Relations
713-825-7702 (cell)
christie@dpwpr.com

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

11,000 new mothers to receive literacy resources by end of 2024

Houston, Texas (March 19, 2024) –The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation and HCA Houston Healthcare are excited to announce the expansion of the newly created Raising a Reader program. Launched in November 2023 during National Family Literacy Month, Raising a Reader aims to give more babies a strong, 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. The expanded program will ensure that 11,000 new mothers at HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake, HCA Houston Healthcare West and The Woman's Hospital of Texas receive information and resources before they leave the hospital following the birth of their babies.

Funding to support Raising a Reader is made possible by HCA Houston Healthcare, contributions from the Foundation's Young Professionals Group and Ladies for Literacy Guild and general funds invested by the Foundation.

"Nearly eighty-five percent of brain development occurs during the first three years of life," said Dr. Julie Baker Finck, President & CEO, Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation. "What parents and caregivers do with their infants and toddlers during this time to help their brains make connections and foster oral language development is critically important. Healthcare providers, particularly nurses, play a vital role in educating and equipping parents to be their child's first and most important teachers, setting them on a path to lifelong success."

The Raising a Reader program first launched in November 2023 and ran through the holiday season, concluding at the end of the calendar year serving 920 families at HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake and HCA Houston Healthcare West.

"The success of the Raising a Reader program through the 2023 holiday season is evidenced by feedback from participating mothers and the excitement of our amazing nurses," said Kimberly Williams, Assistant Vice President of Community Engagement at HCA Houston Healthcare. "We are delighted to invest in the expansion of the program with the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation into 2024, as our commitment to nurturing early childhood development, empowering new mothers, and enhancing the

overall well-being of our community remains as strong as ever. We look forward to seeing what this year brings.”

New mothers participating in the program will receive a Raising a Reader bag, which includes an indestructible book, a brochure with informative resources with suggested activities for fostering healthy brain development and early literacy, a library card accessible for any public library in Texas, and a prescription to read to their baby for at least 15 minutes every day.

HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake, HCA Houston Healthcare West and The Woman’s Hospital of Texas 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.

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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.

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.

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 Woman’s Hospital of Texas

Since 1976, The Woman’s Hospital of Texas has been the state’s premier facility dedicated to the health and well-being of women, newborns and children. As a Level IV Maternal Designated facility, with an Advanced Level IV NICU, the hospital offers expertise and outstanding care in breast health, imaging, gynecology, obstetrics, high-risk pregnancy, neonatology, minimally-invasive surgery and pediatric care. For more information, visit womanshospital.com. The Woman’s Hospital of Texas is an [HCA Houston Healthcare](#) facility, part of [HCA Healthcare Gulf Coast Division](#).