**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
September 18th, 2020

**Read Better Be Better Awarded $5,000 from Cycle Two of the United for the Valley Arizona COVID-19 Fund**

PHOENIX, AZ. – A Phoenix-based 501(c)(3), Read Better Be Better (RBBB), was awarded $5,000 from Cycle Two of the United for the Valley Arizona COVID-19 Fund (UVCF) for their Read Better Be Better At Home programming.

Funding for RBBB programming is crucial in this moment, as the learning of all Arizona students has been detrimentally affected by school closures in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This impact has been especially harsh for low-income students, who often don't have access to the internet and additional educational resources in the home that many schools are relying on to deliver distance learning—compounding already existing learning and achievement gaps.

According to the recent McKinsey & Company study entitled “COVID-19 and Student Learning in the United States: The Hurt Could Last a Lifetime,” "The average loss in our middle epidemiological scenario (return to in-class schooling in January 2021) is seven months. But Black students may fall behind by 10.3 months, Hispanic students by 9.2 months, and low-income students by more than a year. We estimate that this would exacerbate existing achievement gaps by 15 to 20 percent."

For a state that is historically ranked in the bottom of the nation for public education, this scenario could negatively impact the career potential and possibilities of many students, especially those that were already behind. The 10 districts and 62 schools RBBB partners with have asked for RBBB programming to continue during these uncertain times in order to provide their students with a program that helps students improve comprehension, understanding, and enjoyment of reading.

Read Better Be Better launched a pilot of their new RBBB At Home Program in late August of 2020, receiving immediate positive feedback from caregivers. RBBB has since launched RBBB At Home in another district, with plans for launch in all 62 schools and 10 districts by October of 2020.

“They are having so much fun doing the program, and it doesn’t feel like it is something else they *have* to do, rather something they *want* to do,” reported one caregiver.

Now is the time to provide support to the Arizona community and Read Better Be Better is grateful for VSUW’s continued support and funding. “VSUW has supported us from almost the beginning – it was some of their early funding that supported an independent evaluation of our impact data. Thanks to them, we know exactly how powerful this curriculum is. Their continued support has enabled us to adapt our implementation model to meet the current needs of the children in our community,” said Founder and CEO, Sophie Etchart.

RBBB was founded as a response to Arizona’s literacy crisis; the state is ranked 45th in the nation for childhood literacy and 48th for PreK-12 education. Currently, 69% of 3rd graders from low-income families in Arizona do not read at grade level, and students who do not read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school.  With proper reading intervention, there is an 89% chance that students who can read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade will graduate from high school, irrespective of socio-economic status.

For more information about Read Better Be Better, visit [www.readbetterbebetter.org](http://www.readbetterbebetter.org/).

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