JetBlue's Soar with Reading Initiative Lands in Fort Lauderdale

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-- In an Effort to Battle "Book Deserts" and Increase Access to Age Appropriate Books, JetBlue and Random House Children's Books Bring 100,000 Free Books to Kids in South Florida --

-- Public to Choose the Next City to Receive Books in Online #BookBattle --

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- JetBlue (NASDAQ:JBLU) and Random House Children's Books today launched the seventh annual Soar with Reading™ initiative, which provides age-appropriate books to children who need them most. This summer the program lands in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with JetBlue installing four custom vending machines throughout the city to distribute 100,000 books, free of charge. The vending machines will include a variety of children's books. The newest enhancements to the program include the addition of bilingual (Spanish/English) books and given research supporting higher reading scores among students who see their parents reading, a selection of titles appealing to adults. These additions will encourage a cross-generational love of reading.

This Smart News Release features multimedia. View the full release here: http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170627005516/en/



JetBlue's Soar with Reading initiative Llnds in Fort Lauderdale, with JetBlue installing four custom vending machines throughout the city to distribute 100,000 books, free of charge. (Photo: Business Wire)

The program aims to help fight "book deserts," areas offering limited access to age-appropriate books. Soar with Reading ambassadors, including actress/singer Victoria Justice, a South Florida native, and author Mary Pope Osborne, helped reveal the machines to students at Joseph C. Carter Park. To commemorate this year's initiative, Fort Lauderdale Mayor Jack Seiler dedicated June 27 as Soar with Reading Day and June 27 – August 31, 2017 as Soar with Reading Summer.

"Soar with Reading empowers children to take pride in owning books," said Icema Gibbs, director of corporate social responsibility, JetBlue. "Students who visit the vending machines are able to take as many books as they want as often as they want to build their own personal libraries. Our research shows that children are more interested in reading when they see their parents reading. As a result, we've added titles that appeal to grown-ups, allowing families to enjoy reading together."

This is the third year JetBlue has funded this innovative, award-winning book vending machine program. The machines were previously installed in locations in Detroit and Washington, D.C. To measure the program's impact, research was conducted by Dr. Susan Neuman of New York University in these areas before and after the vending machines were installed and found the program had tangible effects on local residents, including:

Three out of four children with access to the vending machines scored higher on early literacy exams than before they had access to the machines.

Parents in neighborhoods with the machines had more knowledge about their children's reading habits than parents in areas without the machines.

"We know that access to books is a foundational necessity for children in order for them to achieve success inside and beyond the classroom," said Barbara Marcus, President and Publisher, Random House Children's Books. "Books allow children and adults to explore the far reaches of their imaginations, and we are thrilled to be part of the JetBlue program, which provides young people with the opportunity to experience that adventure, regardless of where they live."

Vending Machine Initiative

The vending machines, powered by Innovative Vending Solutions, will be restocked throughout the summer with new titles. Children and families are welcome to visit the book vending machines as often as they would like and can take as many books as they'd like. The Soar with Reading book vending machines will be available through August 31, 2017, at the following locations:

Joseph C. Carter Park | 1450 W. Sunrise Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

Osswald Park | 2220 NW 21st Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

Edgar P. Mills Multi-Purpose Center | 900 NW 31st Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

Riverland Branch Library | 2710 Davie Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312

Online #BookBattle

Last summer, JetBlue's vending machine program visited Detroit. During that time, the annual online #BookBattle voting competition also took place, where JetBlue's customers and crewmembers and the local community overwhelmingly voted for Fort Lauderdale to receive 100,000 free children's books in 2017. This year, four cities—Boston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco—will go head-to-head in the national online #BookBattle to receive the 2018 donation. Voting is open at SoarwithReading.com through August 31. For the first time, anyone who casts a vote online will also receive a special 99¢ digital children's book from Penguin Random House.

Continuing the program's investment in Detroit, a selection of Random House Children's Books titles will be donated to local partners there throughout the summer.

Soar with Reading Ambassadors

To celebrate the Soar with Reading launch, actress and singer Victoria Justice and renowned Magic Tree House author Mary Pope Osborne joined JetBlue, Random House Children's Books, and officials from the city of Fort Lauderdale at a celebration to reveal the book vending machines and allow young residents to select their first free books. Victoria Justice, a South Florida native, and Mary Pope Osborne, whose bestselling series continues this August with *A Big Day for Baseball* and the new nonfiction book *Baseball,* will support the program throughout the summer by encouraging participation in the #BookBattle. Random House Children's Book authors Judd Winick (Hilo series), R. J. Palacio (*Wonder*), and Chris Grabenstein (Mr. Lemoncello's Library series) and illustrator Christian Robinson (*Little Penguins*) are also active members of the campaign, helping to generate awareness for the program and spark online voting in each #BookBattle city.

In 2011, JetBlue launched Soar with Reading to encourage kids' imaginations to take flight through reading. Since its inception, Soar with Reading has supplied more than $2,750,000 worth of books to kids in need. Soar with Reading is a joint project of JetBlue and Random House Children's Books. For additional information, visit SoarWithReading.com

Soar with Reading is a signature JetBlue For Good® program, JetBlue's platform for social impact and corporate responsibility. Giving back is part of JetBlue's DNA and is core to its mission of inspiring humanity. Centered around volunteerism and service, JetBlue For Good focuses on the areas that are most important to the airline's customers and crew members—community, youth/education, and the environment. JetBlue's core programs and partnerships directly impact the areas where its customers and crew members live and work by enhancing education and providing access to those who are traditionally underserved. Signature programs include Blue Horizons For Autism, which helps introduce air travel in a realistic environment to families and children affected by autism; and Swing For Good, which raises funds for education and youth-focused nonprofits. Join the #JetBlueForGood conversation on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, check for regular updates, and get involved.

ABOUT JETBLUE

JetBlue is New York's Hometown Airline™ and a leading carrier in Boston, Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood, Los Angeles (Long Beach), Orlando, and San Juan. JetBlue carries more than 38 million customers a year to 101 cities in the U.S., Caribbean, and Latin America, with an average of 1,000 daily flights. For more information, please visit jetblue.com.

ABOUT RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Random House Children's Books is the world's largest English-language children's trade book publisher. Creating books for toddlers through young adult readers, in all formats from board books to activity books to picture books, novels, ebooks, and apps, the imprints of Random House Children's Books bring together award-winning authors and illustrators, world-famous franchise characters, and multimillion-copy series. The company's website Kids @ Random (rhcbooks.com) offers an array of activities, games, and resources for children, teens, parents, and educators. Random House Children's Books is a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

ABOUT INNOVATIVE VENDING SOLUTIONS

Innovative Vending Solutions specializes in nontraditional vending and automated retail systems. IVS has been marketing and providing its systems to manufacturers, retail outlets, restaurants, nonprofits, and individuals since 2008. Their machines are custom-manufactured, configured, and tested to meet the specific needs of each client, whether a regional brand or a national retailer. IVS machines are equipped with cutting-edge, user-friendly technology and can be customized to fit any location, brand, or event. For more information, visit innovativevendingsolutions.com.

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