For Immediate Release
Contact: Benay Hicks, Associate Director of Communications and Marketing
857-225-5039
benay@bookharvest.org

Book Harvest Holds Graduation for the Book Babies Class of 2023
Five-Year-Olds Receive Diplomas from Literacy Program

June 14, Durham, NC: Thirty-four graduates of Book Harvest’s Book Babies Class of 2023 received their diplomas on Saturday, June 10, 2023 in a celebratory ceremony at the W.G. Pearson Center in Durham. Enrolled in Book Babies since their birth in 2018, these graduates wrapped up their five-year engagement with the Book Harvest program at a balloon-filled gathering that heralded their literacy accomplishments, their love of reading, and their readiness for kindergarten. Each graduate walked across the stage wearing a bright yellow cap and gown, accompanied by a proud family member.

Cheri Coleman, Book Harvest Durham’s Associate Director of Early Literacy, shared her remarks, “Thank you to the parents for allowing us to walk this journey with you for the first five years of your child’s life – from newborns to soon-to-be kindergarteners! And to the graduates: you’ve done an amazing job and we’re grateful to be part of your story as you continue learning and growing.”

Launched in 2013, Book Babies partners with families to develop their skills and confidence to nurture their children’s early childhood language and literacy development. The award-winning innovative literacy coaching and book provision program provides Medicaid-eligible children and their families with more than 100 new books, quarterly literacy coaching home visits, a $500 college-or-career savings account, annual celebrations, and a variety of additional resources and supports.

The Book Babies Class of 2023 graduation ceremony included personal reflections from a graduate and two Book Babies parents about their experiences with the program. Adelfa Santiago, mother of 2023 graduate Victoria, expressed her gratitude, “The truth, personally, we were not used to reading books. However, since discovering Book Babies, Victoria is the one who encourages us, the adults at home, to read books. Book Babies has truthfully changed us. Victoria is very much interested in books and now I see that her little sister is interested, as well. Book Babies has been a great support to us, thank you so much!”

---

1 Original language: La verdad, en lo personal, no acustumbre a leer libros, pero desde que conocimos a Book Babies, Victoria es la que nos inculca a nostros los adultos en casa a leer libros...Book Babies en la verdad nos a cambiado a nosotros, Victoria esta muy interesada en los libros y veo que ahora su hermanita esta tambien. Book Babies es un gran apoyo a nosotros, muchas gracias.
Each child was awarded a diploma, a personal gift box filled with learning games, puzzles, and, of course, books! And all graduates and their siblings had the opportunity to choose from a large selection of brand new books to read over the summer and keep forever – signature components of the Books on Break program that awaits all students in Durham Public Schools. The event culminated in a joyous piñata activity with sweet treats for all to enjoy.

“It’s not just about the books. It’s about the bond that a parent and a child have, and the book is at the center of that,” said Book Harvest Durham’s Executive Director Tabitha Blackwell. “The words and stories that parents share with their babies, starting at birth, is the beginning of a lifetime of literacy.”

Book Harvest’s Founder and CEO Ginger Young commented on the significance of the ceremony, “I’m a big believer in celebrating successes, and these Book Babies graduates enrolled as newborns and stayed with us for five full years! That’s extraordinary. What a testament to their parent’s love and willingness to stay the course. Our graduates are heading to kindergarten with a strong foundation, ready to take on all of the educational opportunities that await them. I can’t wait to see where they go from here!”

- View additional Book Babies 2023 Graduation photos
- Watch 3 minute video by Margaret Larson on why Book Babies matters
- Access logos, videos, and b-roll: https://bookharvest.org/media-kit/
- Learn more: https://bookharvest.org/book-babies/

About Book Harvest:

Book Harvest is a nationally recognized, award-winning nonprofit organization headquartered in Durham, North Carolina. Since 2011, Book Harvest has provided more than two million books to families in North Carolina, ensuring that parents have the tools and power to ignite and strengthen their children’s literacy. With programs that are grounded in evidence, Book Harvest believes that literacy starts at birth, in the home, with parents and with books. The organization envisions a world in which reading, learning, and access to information are considered rights, not privileges, so that all children thrive. Learn more at bookharvest.org.

# # #