



For Immediate Release

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Literacy Empowers All Families' Mascot Makes First Appearance

Who: [Literacy Empowers All Families \(LEAF\)](#)

What: First Appearance of the Bookworm Mascot called "Leaf"

The LEAF program unveiled their new mascot, Leaf the Bookworm, at Woodland Middle School this week. Woodland Middle School is part of a new component of the LEAF program designed to help inspire middle school students to become "Champions for Leaf." Students at Woodland hosted a group of area early child care providers and read to the children. Leaf the bookworm was on-hand to greet the toddlers as they arrived. This was the mascot's first appearance around town.

To date, the Leaf's Champions program has established pre-school libraries at four Sarasota County middle schools: Woodland, McIntosh, Booker and Heron Creek. The books for the libraries were provided by the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County and the Sarasota County Libraries' Imagination Library program. Students at the middle schools are encouraged to check out pre-school books to take home and read to their younger siblings, cousins, friends and neighbors. While the younger children benefit by being read to, this also helps the middle school children, especially those who are struggling readers, improve their fluency by practicing in front of a non-judgmental audience.

Where: Woodland Middle School

About LEAF: The Community Foundation of Sarasota County along with Sarasota's early learning and education communities recognized the importance of early intervention and came together to establish the [Literacy Empowers All Families \(LEAF\)](#) program. The comprehensive literacy initiative is funded by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and is supported by a number of community partners including the Sarasota County School Board, Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County, Sarasota County Library System and Children First. This multi-year commitment to reading and learning for children, parents and educators "connects the dots" from birth through middle school and unites early child care providers, the libraries, and the Sarasota County school district in a unified approach to serving at-risk families.

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Images Attached: