
News Release

January 31, 2011
Media Contact: Jana Brady
601-432-6683 | jana.brady@mpbonline.org

MPB to be Honored as 2010 KIDS COUNT Success Story *Between the Lions* Preschool Literacy Initiative Wins Award

JACKSON, Miss. – Mississippi Public Broadcasting’s (MPB) *Between the Lions* Preschool Literacy Initiative will be recognized on February 2 and 3 as a 2010 Mississippi KIDS COUNT Success Story.

The *Between the Lions* Preschool Literacy Initiative takes segments from the Emmy® Award-winning PBS KIDS series *Between the Lions* and introduces them as education curriculum at child care centers throughout Mississippi. The curriculum provides early word recognition and comprehension activities for the three- and four-year olds. In 2010, MPB staff devoted over 96 hours to training and mentoring teachers as they implemented the curriculum.

“We are so proud of the impact that the *Between the Lions* Preschool Literacy Initiative has had on Mississippi’s child care centers and are very honored to be recognized as a Kids Count Success Story,” said Nikki McCelleis, MPB’s Deputy Executive Director for Education.

For the past five years, MPB has worked in child care centers across Mississippi to introduce the *Between the Lions* Preschool Literacy Initiative. In 2007, MPB began a partnership with Rotary Club International to implement the curriculum as part of Rotary’s desire to combat illiteracy. Overall, the program has impacted over 2,500 children. In the 2010-2011 school years, MPB has expanded its *Between the Lions* Preschool Literacy Initiative to Pre-Kindergarten classrooms.

A study by the University of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg School for Communication in 2010 revealed that the *Between the Lions* Preschool Literacy Initiative is a powerful tool in helping preschool children develop fundamental literacy skills. The study, which evaluated reading and literacy skills for over 300 four- and five-year-olds in the Jackson metro area, shows that students who are exposed to the *Between the Lions* curriculum far outpace their peers in knowledge of words and phonological awareness.

The focus of the 2010 Mississippi KIDS COUNT Success Story was education. Topics for nomination were Early Care and Education, Healthy Schools, High School Graduation Rates, and Literacy. MPB’s work will be highlighted in the Mississippi KIDS COUNT Data Book, as well as on a DVD produced by Mississippi State University. MPB will be honored during the annual KIDS COUNT Legislative breakfast on February 2, as well as during the KIDS COUNT Summit to be held the following day.

Mississippi KIDS COUNT is a project of the Family and Children Research Unit of the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University. Since 1998, this unit has been responsible for conducting research on issues affecting the health, safety, and well-being of children and their families. Through partnerships with both public and private agencies, the FCRU has been able to conduct research and engage in program planning and evaluation in order to build effective service systems and inform state, local, and national policymakers.

The mission of Mississippi KIDS COUNT is to serve as the leading resource for comprehensive information on Mississippi's children and serve as a catalyst for improving outcomes for children, families, and communities. Mississippi KIDS COUNT is funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Between the Lions is a multimedia educational initiative created to help children ages three to seven acquire beginning reading skills and a love of reading. Built around a curriculum that incorporates the most recent scientific research in literacy instruction, each episode features an engaging variety of animation, puppetry, live action, and music. The series is part of PBS KIDS® Raising Readers, a national reading initiative focused on helping children ages two to eight, especially those from low-income families, to build their reading skills.

Between the Lions is produced by WGBH Boston, Sirius Thinking, Ltd., and Mississippi Public Broadcasting.

Between the Lions is funded in part by The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Education's Ready To Learn grant, and by the Barksdale Reading Institute. National corporate funding is provided by Chick-fil-A, Inc.

Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB) provides relevant instructional and public affairs programming to Mississippians through its statewide television and radio network. MPB enhances the work of educators, students, parents and learners of all ages by providing informative programming and educational resources. MPB's locally-produced programming focuses on the people, resources and attractions that reflect Mississippi's unique culture and diverse heritage. Children's television programs constitute a major portion of the daytime and weekend morning schedules. MPB provides a valuable resource to Mississippians in disseminating information as part of the state's emergency preparedness and response system. Since 1970, MPB has won over 400 national, regional and statewide awards, including Emmy®, Edward R. Murrow and Parents' Choice® Awards.

###