President George H.W. Bush and Mrs. Barbara Bush Mark the 25th Anniversary of the Signing of the National Literacy Act

~ Landmark act passed in 1991 was the first to focus on adult literacy ~

Washington, D.C. – July 25 marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the National Literacy Act, which was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush. This landmark act was inspired in large part by Barbara Bush’s passion for literacy. Since its passage in 1991, millions of adults have had a second chance to earn their high school diplomas, and tens of millions more have learned to read, write and speak English.

As this milestone anniversary approaches, President and Mrs. Bush were asked to reflect on the passage of the National Literacy Act and its impact:

“Signing the National Literacy Act at once culminated the efforts of so many advocates from across the country, while also opening a new and more hopeful chapter for millions of Americans of all ages,” said President Bush. “I could not be prouder of Barbara for the 35 years she has spent working on this fundamentally important issue, and helping lead the charge for action and results. I am biased, of course, but I truly believe her passion, vision and dedication have helped change millions of lives for the better over these last 25 years.”

“The National Literacy Act put into policy my belief that education is a civil right, no matter one’s age,” said Mrs. Bush. “The needs of adult learners are so often overlooked, yet adult education initiatives have enormous potential to improve the social and economic well-being of families, communities and our nation as a whole. What was true 25 years ago is still true today: everyone deserves a chance to obtain the education they need to provide for their families, set the next generation on a path to success and achieve their dreams.”

In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the signing, the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy has curated a literacy resource center—available at www.barbarabush.org—with media assets regarding the National Literacy Act:

- Photo: Signing of the National Literacy Act, 1991
- Video: Sen. Lamar Alexander’s reflections on the National Literacy Act
- Webpage: Sen. Lamar Alexander’s remarks from the Barbara Bush Foundation’s Conversation on the Future of Adult Literacy as entered into the Congressional Record
- Video: National Celebration of Reading at the Library of Congress

The Foundation began celebrating the 25th anniversary of the National Literacy Act earlier this summer, with two events held in Washington, D.C. A day-long symposium gathered select technology leaders, entrepreneurs and policy experts from across the country to discuss visionary, bold and transformational ideas to address America’s adult literacy issues for the next 25 years. Senator Lamar Alexander, who served as U.S. Secretary of Education during the passage and implementation of the National Literacy Act in 1991, joined the group to speak about the successes of the law, which include initiation of national workforce demonstration projects, creation of “indicators” of program quality and establishment of literacy programs for incarcerated individuals.
The following evening, the Foundation hosted the inaugural National Celebration of Reading at the Library of Congress. Members of the Bush family and guests enjoyed readings by former First Lady Laura Bush and Jenna Bush Hager, David Baldacci, A.J. Jacobs and Jon Meacham. By hosting these events in Washington, D.C., the Foundation sought both to celebrate achievements in literacy, and to stimulate a broader national dialogue about solutions to the serious challenge of low literacy.

About the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy: The Barbara Bush Foundation is the nation’s leading advocate for family literacy. The Foundation was established by Mrs. Barbara Bush in 1989, and today is a public charity which aspires to achieve a vision of fostering the opportunity for every man, woman and child to secure a better life through literacy. To learn more about the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy’s commitment to promote family literacy in homes across America, please visit www.barbarabush.org or join the conversation on Facebook or Twitter (@BarbaraBushFdn).

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