

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

YMCA selects The Reader's Edge® For i-Learn Program

Dropouts earn high school diplomas - reading a necessary skill

Scottsdale, ARIZ.—April 20, 2004—The Literacy Company www.readfaster.com along with the YMCA www.ymca.org today announced the use of The Reader's Edge as part of a pilot program with the i-Learn students at several YMCA teen centers. The Valley of the Sun YMCA launched an innovative youth development program in partnership with the Chandler Unified School District, called i-Learn, to address the student dropout problem among Arizona high schools. The i-Learn (www.i-learn.org) program is designed for students who have been suspended or expelled for non-violent offenses, or have left school because of family obligations or pregnancy. The students use a multimedia learning system using actual teachers and textbooks via a high-speed data connection. In addition to required courses, SAT/ACT and AIMS study programs are incorporated and upon completion, students are able to participate in actual graduation ceremonies.

The Reader's Edge is an affordable, easy-to-use software program that teaches fluent reading skills (effective and efficient speed reading). The Reader's Edge teaches users to unlearn the habits of slow readers (oral readers) and learn the habits of fluent (silent) readers. It has been added to the current curriculum of Language, Arts, Social Studies, Economics, Math, Science, Biology, Chemistry and other life skills courses. The YMCA recognizes the critical value of strong reading skills as a basis of success for high school course work and career achievements. Bill Carstens, through his 'Just For Kids' Foundation, has generously funded The Reader's Edge software to be used in the i-learn program.

According to a report published by The Partnership for Reading (a collaborative effort of the National Institute for Literacy, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the U.S. Department of Education) titled *Teaching Children to Read*, states, "Fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. When fluent readers read silently, they recognize words automatically. They see, read and process groups of words (units of meaning) quickly to help them gain understanding and comprehension from what they read." The Reader's Edge program, a standard of excellence in teaching fluent reading skills, is based on extensive research by The Literacy Company into proven methods of how best to teach effective and efficient reading.

"The YMCA continues to offer cutting-edge methods for i-Learn students to excel and be successful. The Reader's Edge has been a perfect compliment to our technology-based curriculum and has helped our students improve their reading fluency." said Laura Young, YMCA Technology Program Director. "The students enjoy using the software and don't view it as 'work' which makes it fun to incorporate into our existing curriculum."

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The students have embraced the solution and are using it to improve their reading skills. "I think it is fast paced, fun and interactive" Male, age 15

Currently, the i-learn program combined with The Reader's Edge, is being offered to students ages 15 to 19 for a total of 20 weeks at the Chandler/Gilbert and Christown YMCA learning centers.

About the YMCA

Valley of the Sun YMCA was founded in 1894 and incorporated in 1937 as an association of YMCA branches. Its values are: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. The mission of the YMCA is *to put into practice programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all*. The Valley of the Sun YMCA is one of the largest, most diversified providers of human services in Arizona. The organization has grown to include 13 branches, with a budget of almost \$28 million a year, including \$10 million of services given away to those in need. The Valley of the Sun YMCA has 850 employees, of whom 200 are full-time and 650 are part-time. In 2003, the organization provided service to over 200,000 individuals, 166,000 of whom were youth. The YMCA is one of the largest child care provider in Arizona, and its other core programs include youth sports, aquatics, residence camps, adult fitness, affordable housing, and a host of prevention and early intervention programs for youth and teens.

The Valley of the Sun YMCA is the largest non-profit human services agency in Arizona. The YMCA is a youth, adult and family non-profit, volunteer-driven organization offering a wide variety of programs and activities for YMCA members and the community.

About The Literacy Company

The Literacy Company, Scottsdale, Arizona (founded in 1997), with nearly six years dedicated to research and development, is the developer of The Reader's Edge®, an affordable, easy-to-use software program that teaches fluent reading skills (effective and efficient speed reading). The Reader's Edge teaches users to unlearn the habits of slow readers (oral readers) and learn the habits of fluent (silent) readers. The Literacy Company has pending patent applications for The Reader's Edge® program, Prime Words™, Fluency Builder™, First Words™ and Learn to Read™ programs for use in conjunction with The Reader's Edge program.

To date, The Literacy Company has created partnerships with national organizations such as ProLiteracy, NASA, The Boys and Girls Clubs, NABA (Native American Business Alliance), NAWBO (National Association of Women Business Owners), IMD (International Institute for Management Development) and Business Book Review. Further, The Literacy Company's goals are aligned with The Department of Education and The White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities.

For more information, please visit www.FluentReading.com or www.readfaster.com. Or call 1/866-ReadFast (732-3327).

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