



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**SELCO COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION COLLECTS 1,100 NEW AND LIGHTLY USED  
CHILDREN'S BOOKS, REFURBISHING MANY OF THEM, TO BENEFIT LITERACY  
NONPROFIT SMART READING**

**Book drives held at SELCO locations in Burns, Central Oregon, and Lane County  
will place books in the hands of local children**

(SPRINGFIELD, Ore.) – To celebrate World Book Day on April 23, SELCO Community Credit Union announced that it collected 1,100 new and lightly used children's books – and SELCO employees volunteered en masse to sort and clean many of them – during its recent book drive benefiting [SMART Reading](#), a statewide children's literacy nonprofit. The book drive and cleaning event, part of the [SELCO Steps Up](#) community giving program, was held March 11-29 at 12 SELCO locations in Burns, Central Oregon, and Lane County.

Now in its second year, the book drive asked SELCO employees and credit union members to drop off new or slightly used books, all of which will be distributed by SMART Reading to help local children build their home libraries. SELCO employees also sorted and cleaned each used book so they are donated in the very best possible condition. In all, 33 SELCO employees volunteered to refurbish the books.

According to SMART Reading, which SELCO has partnered with since 1996, early literacy is a crucial part of children’s formative education, and book drives such as SELCO’s aim to promote that educational link. Research shows that having 25 books in a household produces an average of two additional years of total educational achievement.

“Ensuring children have access to books in early childhood is vital to the development of their reading skills,” said Jessica Bowersox, Executive Director of SMART Reading. “Through partnerships like this one with SELCO, we’ve given away tens of thousands of books across the state in the 2023-24 academic year alone.”

SELCO’s combined book drive and cleaning event started in Lane County in 2023, and it was enormously popular amongst the credit union’s team members. As part of the new SELCO Steps Up initiative, the program was expanded this year to include branches in Bend, Redmond, and Burns, proving equally popular in those areas.

The results in each market include:

- 687 donated books at SELCO’s Eugene and Springfield locations. Those books will be donated to a series of free book fairs with the [4J School District's BEST After School Program](#) and [Burrito Brigade's Waste-to-Taste](#) food pantry.
- The Burns branch collected 283 books (including 52 from Chandra Worman, a former Mrs. Oregon), the most of any single branch that participated in the book drive.
- Branches in Bend and Redmond collected 130 books.

“This was an all-hands effort, and we couldn’t be more proud to support the work of SMART Reading to get books in the hands of young readers,” said Olivia Sorensen, Senior Community Development Specialist for SELCO. “SELCO was founded by educators almost a century ago, so our partnership with SMART Reading is a perfect fit. We’ve seen firsthand the incredible value a child gets from owning their own

books. Is there anything better than getting lost in a story from a book that is all yours? Not a chance!”

[Click here](#) to watch a video about the SELCO-SMART Reading book drive.

### **About SMART Reading**

SMART Reading is a children’s literacy nonprofit that serves kids in Oregon’s highest-need schools with two ingredients critical for literacy and learning success: one-on-one reading time and access to books. SMART Reading mobilizes volunteers to read with PreK through third-grade children, building confidence, literacy skills, and a love of reading. SMART Reading provides a meaningful way for Oregonians to make a direct impact in their communities. Since 1992, SMART Reading has steadily grown to become Oregon’s largest volunteer literacy program. Kids in the program receive up to 14 new books throughout the school year to keep and read with their families. To learn more, donate, or volunteer, visit [smartreading.org](http://smartreading.org) or call 877-598-4633.

### **About SELCO Steps Up:**

The SELCO Steps Up program aims to create positive, innovative, lasting change through volunteerism, resource support, and collaboration with community partners. In 2023 alone, SELCO reinvested more than \$250,000 in the communities it serves through educator grants, scholarships, and impact-driven sponsorships. SELCO staff also committed a total of more than 1,000 volunteer hours in 2023. As a credit union founded by teachers, education is a cornerstone of these efforts, focusing on removing barriers to financial literacy. By empowering individuals and families to achieve financial well-being, SELCO strives to build a strong foundation for all its members and neighbors by empowering individuals and families to achieve financial well-being. Learn more at [www.selco.org/steps-up](http://www.selco.org/steps-up).

### **About SELCO Community Credit Union:**

Founded nearly 90 years ago by a group of fiscally minded teachers, Springfield-based SELCO Community Credit Union today serves more than 150,000 members as one of

the largest and longest-standing Oregon-based credit unions. A not-for-profit, federally insured, member-driven financial cooperative with more than \$2.7 billion in assets, SELCO provides its member-owners with exceptional rates and low fees on a full range of financial products and services, including banking, mortgages, personal and business loans, investments, and insurance. Membership is available to anyone who lives or works in one of the 27 Oregon or eight Washington counties SELCO serves. For more information or to become a member today, stop by one of SELCO's 15 branches, visit [selco.org](http://selco.org), or call 800-445-4483.

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