

**United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra**  
639 Isbell Rd., Suite 460  
Reno, NV 89509  
775-322-8668  
www.uwnns.org



**United Way of Northern  
Nevada and the Sierra**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 9, 2014

Media Contact: Scott Walquist, KPS3 Marketing  
phone: 775-686-2116 cell: 775-287-6788  
scott@kps3.com

## **United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra Partners with Soroptimist International of Reno To Help Second Graders At Florence Drake Elementary School Learn To Read**

**Reno, Nev.** — United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra (UWNNS) has partnered with Soroptimist International of Reno to work with 20 second graders at Florence Drake Elementary School with the goal to assist the students with reading skills. Volunteers from Soroptimist International of Reno will read and mentor the children weekly reading seven different age-appropriate books starting Oct. 16. The program, called “Today’s Readers, Tomorrow’s Leaders,” also includes giving books to the children to take home to read with their parents.

UWNNS recently completed an extensive, region-wide process to determine the most critical issue to focus its resources on. Through this process, UWNNS learned that the success of the community’s children – specifically each child’s success with early grade reading as it relates to high school graduation – was the most critical issue to people in communities they serve. The UWNNS Board of Directors formally adopted “children reading at grade level” as the organization’s focus with the goal of doubling the number of children in northern Nevada reading proficiently by the end of third grade by 2020.

“There are several urgent reasons why northern Nevada communities must improve third grade reading scores,” said Karen Barsell, chief executive officer and president of UWNNS. “There is a direct, proven relationship between third grade reading scores and high school graduation rates – sadly, even a predictor of who will go to prison. In turn, high school graduation is a key factor in life success and our state’s economy.”

Statistics show students that do not graduate from high school are more likely to be unemployed, have a child as a teenager, and rely on government cash assistance, food stamps and housing assistance. Every “drop-out” costs the community an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes and productivity. The impact of the low graduation rate directly affects Nevada’s economy by contributing to the lack of an educated, skilled workforce. Currently, 75 percent of Nevada children are not reading at grade level.

### **About Soroptimist International Reno**

Since 1942, Soroptimist International Reno has been providing volunteer services and financial aid to the women and families of Northern Nevada. In addition to providing educational scholarships to women in Reno on an annual basis, Soroptimist International of Reno members donate valuable time in volunteering for local organizations such as The Food Bank of Northern Nevada, the Salvation Army, STEP2, and Ally’s Prom Closet. In 2002, Soroptimist International of Reno was recognized as the top non-profit organization in the State of Nevada and won the Governor’s Points of Light Award.

### **About United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra**

UWNNS has successfully served northern Nevada for more than 70 years. (UWNNS) has completed an historic direction-setting effort to identify and concentrate on the most important social issues affecting individuals and families in the region. UWNNS has adopted the critical issue of “children reading at grade level” as its focus area moving forward. This adopted issue will allow UWNNS to better prioritize resources to address key issues in order to make the greatest impact and create lasting change. In 2014, UWNNS will reach the goal of \$100 Million raised since we started in 1942. To celebrate this goal, we have established the \$100 Million Club and invite you to join us. For more information, call 775-322-8668 or visit [www.uwnns.org](http://www.uwnns.org).

###