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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ford Family Foundation Awards SMART \$600,000 for Program Advancing Kindergarten Readiness

Roseburg, Ore. – The Ford Family Foundation has awarded SMART with a three-year, \$600,000 grant to fund program expansion and evaluation specific to ensuring children in rural communities across Oregon are entering kindergarten ready to learn to read.

“With an increasing body of research indicating that early intervention is key to improving children's future prospects, broadening our efforts with kindergarten-age children is a top, strategic priority for SMART,” said Chris Otis, SMART executive director. “This grant represents an incredibly significant step for SMART, as it will allow us to more deeply understand the impacts of our reading program on preparing children for kindergarten, and expand our program offerings in some of Oregon’s most under-served communities.”

Designed and implemented by researchers at Portland State University, the comprehensive evaluation will span two years and will measure early childhood literacy outcomes from SMART’s pre-school and kindergarten program offerings. The evaluation which will be used to improve program outcomes, resulting in even greater impact on the reading readiness of children in rural Oregon, Otis said.

About The Ford Family Foundation

The Ford Family Foundation was established in 1957 by Kenneth W. and Hallie E. Ford. Its mission is “successful citizens and vital rural communities” in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. The Foundation is located in Roseburg, Oregon, with a Scholarship office in Eugene.

About SMART® (Start Making A Reader Today)

SMART, Start Making A Reader Today, is a statewide nonprofit organization that envisions an Oregon where every child can read and is empowered to succeed. We partner with schools around the state and engage community volunteers to read one-on-one with PreK-3rd grade children, helping strengthen literacy skills and encourage a love of reading.

Over the past two decades, SMART has steadily grown to become Oregon’s largest volunteer literacy program. In 2011-2012, we served more than 8,500 children statewide with the help of 5,000 community volunteers. Children in the program receive 14 new books throughout the school year to keep and read with their families. Together, with support from communities and schools around the state, SMART is improving the reading capacity of Oregon’s children. Visit www.getSMARToregon.org or call 877-598-4633 to learn more about SMART.

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