

Contact: Amy Brown, SMART, 503-937-4803 or [ambrown@getsmartoregon.org](mailto:ambrown@getsmartoregon.org) or Darcie Meihoff, CMD on behalf of SMART, 503-488-4252 or [dmeihoff@cmdagency.com](mailto:dmeihoff@cmdagency.com)

**For Release:**

March 15, 2007

**SMART ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP CHANGE, SEEKS BROADER BASE OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

PORTLAND, Ore. – SMART (Start Making A Reader Today), Oregon’s leading nonprofit early literacy program, announced today that CEO Lisa Wiebe will step down and that the organization will begin searching for her replacement.

“We really appreciated Lisa’s dedication and enthusiasm,” said Linda Wright, chair of SMART’s board of directors. “We wish her all the best as she moves into the next phase of her life and career.”

Amy Brown will serve as interim CEO for the organization. An accomplished fundraiser, Brown has been an executive staff member with SMART for 10 years and has helped secure major-gift support for the organization through private donations and pledges. SMART is also managed by a strong board of directors comprised of representatives from some of Oregon’s most prominent organizations.

The change comes at a critical time for SMART. Celebrating 15 years of delivering proven one-on-one reading support to thousands of K-3 children, the organization is focused on broadening its funding base so it can continue to serve communities across the state. Some of the Northwest’s largest and well-known companies and foundations have helped SMART expand rapidly to 32 of the state’s 36 counties. But to sustain and eventually grow the program, SMART must generate support from a broader base of individuals and small businesses.

“We are truly grateful to our major partners for their exceptional leadership and support. But to ensure that SMART continues to be available to communities across Oregon, we need many more individuals and businesses to support our efforts. Otherwise, we run the risk of having to cut back service to schools and children who need us,” said Brown. “It takes thousands of caring volunteers and donors to make SMART work, and we are counting on that strong commitment and support now more than ever.”

Known as one of the most cost-effective nonprofit early literacy programs in the nation, SMART receives less than five percent of its annual revenue from fees and government sources. The remainder comes from foundations and corporations, with a small but growing percentage coming from individuals, small businesses and community organizations.

According to Brown, SMART needs to rally more support from all levels. SMART will hold “listening sessions” throughout the state this spring, engaging community partners to help generate more support for SMART in their areas. SMART also will begin running a series of donated ads to reach individuals and small businesses, will implement broad-based community fundraising campaigns and will continue to build its reputation as a literacy leader. Already, SMART has been endorsed by the national Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, an organization that evaluates the scientific effectiveness of social policy and service programs.

“We need to guard against a false sense of security that SMART will always be available to children who need it,” said Brown. “The reality is that we need help from donors large and small to keep this incredibly effective program alive and well for thousands of children in this state.”

(more)

***About SMART***

Oregon's leading nonprofit early literacy organization, SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) mobilizes thousands of caring adult volunteers to read one-on-one every week with two K-3 children for a half hour each. Participating children also receive new books every month to keep and read with their families. SMART is serving 12,000 children across Oregon in 2006-07. For more information, contact SMART at 877-598-4633 or visit [www.getsmartoregon.org](http://www.getsmartoregon.org).

###