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Des Moines nonprofit celebrates 20 years of reading mentorship with founder Sen. Tom Harkin *Everybody Wins! Iowa invites the public to the anniversary event*

DES MOINES – Former U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin will help local nonprofit Everybody Wins! Iowa ring in its 20th year with a special event at The Tom and Ruth Harkin Center at Drake University on Aug. 31.

Everybody Wins! Iowa is a reading mentor program located in several central Iowa school districts, including Des Moines, Ankeny, West Des Moines, Norwalk, and Indianola. Caring volunteer mentors are paired with local students who read aloud together once a week in the signature program, Power Read.

Sen. Harkin brought the Iowa chapter of Everybody Wins! to his home state in 2002 after being a reading mentor with the Washington D.C. chapter while he served in the U.S. Senate. He will be the keynote speaker at this month's event.

"We are thrilled Sen. Harkin will help us celebrate 20 years of reading mentorship in central Iowa. Reading is the foundation for students' success in school and life, and Everybody Wins! Iowa aims to ensure all students are getting the skills they need to graduate high school and be contributing members of society. We look forward to pairing students and mentors together for many more decades to come," said Everybody Wins! Iowa Executive Director Karen Ligas.

The central Iowa organization started with 15 students and mentors at three Des Moines schools. Since then, 8,500 mentors have read to 9,400 students across seven school districts. In addition to one-to-one read aloud activities, Everybody Wins! Iowa provides each student with books to take home and build their home libraries. It gave 5,419 books to students in FY22.

"I just remember smiling because this is the time I learned how to read," said Julie Penton, a former student in Power Read. Penton, who graduated from Iowa State University with an engineering degree, said participating in Everybody Wins! Iowa had a great impact on her life.

The 20th anniversary event is being held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Aug. 31 at The Tom and Ruth Harkin Center, 2800 University Ave. Tickets are \$50 for the public and \$25 for current and former mentors. They can be purchased online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/everybody-wins-iowa-20th-anniversary-celebration-tickets-342053480167>. All proceeds go toward Everybody Wins! Iowa's signature program Power Read. The organization will celebrate its 20th anniversary throughout the 22/23 school year.

This is the first public event being held at The Tom and Ruth Harkin Center, home of The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement, which opened at Drake University in 2020.

Media wishing to cover the event should contact Karen Ligas at statedirector@everybodywinsiowa.org.

About Everybody Wins! Iowa: *Everybody Wins! Iowa is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring children's success in school and life through weekly one-to-one read-aloud experiences with caring adults. Through these ongoing read-aloud sessions, elementary students in the program use reading as a vehicle to develop their social and emotional learning, build positive relationships with their mentors, and practice reading in a low-pressure setting, which prepares them for success in school and in life.*

About The Tom and Ruth Harkin Center: *The Tom and Ruth Harkin Center, home of The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement at Drake University, serves as a model of inclusion and accessibility to public policy research and citizen engagement made possible by the exceptional vision, leadership and collaboration of individuals with a commitment to social justice and sound decision making.*

The Tom and Ruth Harkin Center opened in 2020, 30 years after the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Sen. Harkin's signature legislative achievement.

About Sen. Tom Harkin: *In 1974, Tom Harkin was elected to Congress from Iowa's Fifth Congressional District. His energetic, person-to-person campaign carried the day against an incumbent in a long-standing Republican district. In 1984, after serving 10 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, Senator Harkin challenged an incumbent senator and won. Iowans returned him to the Senate in 1990, 1996, 2002, and 2008. Senator Harkin made history by becoming the first Iowa Democrat to win a consecutive second term in the U.S. Senate, and to date is the longest serving elected Democrat in Congress in Iowa history. He retired from the United States Senate in January 2015.*

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