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Memphis Botanic Garden to Debut New Outdoor Reading Adventure

Memphis, TN – Memphis Botanic Garden (MBG) is pleased to announce the introduction of a Storybook Trail in the Urban Home Garden beginning this September. The Storybook Trail features “Lola Plants a Garden” by Anna McQuinn on child-height panels, and families are encouraged to engage with the text through reading tips as they stroll the short path and read along together. The Storybook Trail was made possible by a grant from the Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation with a mission to strengthen early literacy in Tennessee.

A family-friendly opening event on September 28 from 10 am-12 pm will include a ribbon cutting, hands-on activities, storytime, and a child-friendly tour of our Urban Home Garden. The event is free with Garden admission, and no reservation is necessary. Attendees are encouraged to bring a picnic lunch and stay after the program to continue the adventure on their own.

“I am so excited for the Memphis Botanic Garden to have its first Storybook Trail. The book, *Lola Plants a Garden* by Anna McQuinn, comes to life when read among the flowers and trees that surround the trail,” said Brianna Helms, Membership and Volunteer Manager. “Mastering reading is an absolutely critical skill that begins in early childhood, and I feel honored we can be a small part of a child’s literacy journey.”

“Our mission is to strengthen early literacy in Tennessee by equipping children with books and innovative literacy tools that foster lifelong learning,” said James Pond, GELF President and CEO. “The Storybook Trail program creates an enriching learning experience by combining literacy with physical activity, allowing children to connect with books while exploring the outdoors. We are deeply grateful to the Memphis Botanic Garden for their partnership in bringing a Storybook Trail to their community. Together, we’re expanding opportunities for children across the state to get outside, get active, and get reading!”

The Storybook Trail program was launched in July 2018 through a partnership between Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation and Tennessee State Parks Conservancy. The first Storybook Trail at a Tennessee State Park was developed and executed at Long Hunter State Park, with the debut of the “Reading Ranger Trail” in 2016. With that inspiration, Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation has been able to expand the program across the state, in partnership with parks at all levels. The Storybook Trail program now includes 51 trails across Tennessee. The trail at the Memphis Botanic Garden will be the second in the Memphis Metropolitan Area, joining T.O. Fuller State Park.

More information about the Storybook Trail Program, including a state-wide map can be found at <https://governorsfoundation.org/programs/storybook-trails/>.

About Memphis Botanic Garden

The Memphis Botanic Garden is a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) organization dedicated to being an exemplary center for horticulture and environmental enrichment. Serving over 40,000 school-aged children annually, and hosting 260,000 visitors each year, Memphis Botanic Garden strives to enhance lives by connecting people with nature, increasing awareness and appreciation of our environment.

About Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation

The mission of Governor’s Early Literacy Foundation (GELF) is to strengthen early literacy in Tennessee by acting as a thought leader, advisor and catalyst to support and sustain early literacy programs for children statewide. These programs include Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, Storybook Trails, Book Buses, K-3rd Grade Summer Reading and Caregiver Engagement. GELF was founded in 2004 by former Gov. Phil Bredesen as a public-private partnership to sustain Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library in Tennessee, giving all birth to age five children the opportunity to receive books in the mail at no cost to families. GELF has grown from solely a book-gifting program to an early literacy organization driven by a vision where all Tennessee children have access to the resources, guidance and support they need to become lifelong learners. For more information, visit www.GovernorsFoundation.org or www.facebook.com/GovEarlyLiteracyTN, or call toll-free at (877) 99-BOOKS.

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