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Boston hopes to help set new world reading record for 7th straight year

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(Jumpstart)

Children listen to the *Ladybug Girl and the Bug Squad* read by Grammy Award-winning artist Ashanti, who is the 2012 "Ambassador" for the Read for the Record campaign.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Millions of people across the globe, including hundreds in Boston, hope to break the world record for the most people reading the same book on the same day later this week when they read the 2011 children's tale "Ladybug Girl and the Bug Squad," written by husband and wife duo Jacky Davis and David Soman.

The Boston-based nonprofit Jumpstart will host its annual international "Read for the Record" campaign on Thursday, Oct. 4, when for organizers expect to set a new record for the world's largest shared reading experience for the seventh straight year.

At the Central Library in Copley Square, an event will be held from 9 to 11:30 a.m. with Massachusetts first lady Diane Patrick scheduled to read to hundreds of youngsters at 10:45 a.m.

In the midst of setting a record, organizers say the event aims to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood literacy.

"In low-income neighborhoods, children start kindergarten 60 percent behind their peers from affluent communities, leaving them unprepared when it's time to start school. When children start school behind, they are more likely to stay behind for the rest of their lives and this gap only widens over time," the hosting nonprofit says.

Read for the Record was created in 2006 by Jumpstart, which formed in 1993 and aims to provide language, literacy and social skills to preschool children from low-income communities.

Five years ago, a children's librarian signed up the North End branch to participate in the Read for the Record day. The move prompted the city's library system to formally partner with the campaign's organizers three years ago, according to library officials. Since then, the Central branch and a growing number of neighborhood branches have held their own gatherings.

A year ago, more than 2.2 million children and adults worldwide nestled around copies of Vermont resident Anna Dewdney's *"Llama Llama Red Pajama"* to set latest reading record formerly held each year by those who participated in the organized readings of Ezra Jacks Keats' *The Snowy Day* in 2010, *Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar* in 2009, Corduroy in 2008, The Story of Ferdinand four years ago, and The Little Engine That Could in 2006, according to Jumpstart.

The day-long campaign is commemorated with reading events organized by individuals, schools, libraries, government organizations and local businesses.

Celebrity guest readers will include Grammy Award-winning, multi-platinum artist Ashanti, who is the 2012 "Ambassador" for the Read for the Record campaign and recently appeared on the Today Show to promote the campaign.

For the third straight year, Read for the Record participants can also read the book online, for free. Through Read for the Record sponsor the Pearson Foundation, the Penguin Group and the We Give Books initiative, every online reader will help donate books to children in need.

In its first five years, the campaign says it has reached an estimated 7 million children, raised more than $7 million for early education programs and more than 1,000,000 books have been donated to children in low-income neighborhoods.

Register to join the record-breaking effort by pledging to read on Oct. 4 at, www.jstart.org.

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