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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **SANDHILLS PANERA BREAD “STUFF-THE-TRUCK” EVENT** **BROUGHT IN 1,000 BOOKS TO BENEFIT R2 READY TO READ**

*Local franchisee presented \$1,000 check to benefit the cause at 12 p.m.*



*From left to right, Melissa Lemieux-Panera Bread Regional Marketing Director, Danielle Covelli-Panera Bread Marketing Coordinator, Martha Jones-Richland 2 Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships, Meredith Covert-Blythewood High School Student, Malik Wilson-Panera Bread General Manager, Sarah DePaepe- Panera Bread Director of Operations, Beth Paxton-Panera Bread Regional Catering Sales Manager, Senator Mia McLeod*

April 28, 2018 – Columbia, SC – The Panera Bread at Sandhills in Columbia at 631 Promenade Place hosted its first-ever “Stuff-The-Truck” book drive Saturday, April 28 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. to support the Richland Two (R2) School District’s Ready to Read initiative. The program was requesting new or gently used books for pre-K to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade reading levels, and all book donors received a Panera Bread coupon for \$3 off the purchase of a You-Pick-Two®.

The “Stuff-The-Truck” event, hosted in partnership with Books-A-Million, was the culmination of a month-long campaign for book donations at the nearby Books-A-Million location. All donations collected within the last month were used to help fill the truck on the day of the event.

Covelli Enterprises, the local franchisee of Panera Bread, donated \$1,000 to purchase books for the program. A formal check presentation by Panera Bread representatives occurred at the event at 12 p.m.

Author Johnny Bloodworth was onsite for a book signing of his new novel *Gift*, and all proceeds benefited the Ready to Read campaign.

R2's Ready to Read initiative was established to expose young children to books and help them build a personal library to enjoy reading at home, especially during summer months. According to the school district's website, research shows that children who are provided books at an early age are more likely to be successful during their educational careers. The district's goal this year was to collect 20,000 books to give to students in pre-K through second grade, which is about 1 book for each student to take home. After this event, the school district will be able to purchase 21,000 books, giving 4 books per child.

"We believe in causes that promote a healthy future for our communities, and there's nothing more important than supporting education at the earliest levels," said Sam Covelli, CEO of Covelli Enterprises, Panera Bread's largest franchisee with locations in eight states including the Carolinas. "Our goal is to find ways to make a positive impact every day through our products and our bakery-cafés, which is why we are so proud to support R2's Ready to Read program.

#### **About Covelli Enterprises**

Covelli Enterprises operates more than 300 Panera Bread bakery-cafés in eight states. Headquartered in Warren, Ohio, Covelli Enterprises is the single largest franchisee of Panera Bread, LLC. In 2017, Covelli Enterprises donated more than \$32 million to hunger relief agencies and non-profit organizations through *Covelli Cares*. [www.covelli.com](http://www.covelli.com)

#### **About R2 Ready to Read**

R2 Ready to Read is a book collection initiative of Richland School District Two designed to give books to the district's youngest Pre-K -2nd grade students. The goal of the program is to increase summer reading at home and encourage parents to read to their children. [www.richland2.org](http://www.richland2.org)