

**News Release: Addressing Community Needs**  
*CSU student service program celebrates 20 years*

CLEVELAND (March 15, 2018) – America Reads was created by the federal government in 1997 to enhance literacy and educational attainment in communities that are both economically and educationally distressed. In creating the initiative, President Bill Clinton asked colleges and universities to initially commit 50% of their Federal Work Study funds to support America Reads tutors serving in their communities. Cleveland State University joined the national initiative in 1998 and over the last two decades has built CSU America Reads into a highly effective, mutually beneficial, community-based partnership.

CSU and their community partners originally set out to address one of the region’s most difficult and persistent problems: getting children to read proficiently by the end of third grade. Due to the program’s longevity and success, it has expanded to include tutoring in math, science, social studies, reading, and language arts and has spurred the development of student service partnerships with multiple organizations in Northeast Ohio.

“CSU America Reads enables our students with financial need to earn money to defray some of the costs of higher education, engage in meaningful work, build their professional network and develop a lifelong commitment to community service,” says Anita Ruf-Young, CSU America Reads coordinator for the last decade. “At the same time, thousands of children in the Greater Cleveland area receive vital educational support and important community organizations get access to additional resources that help in achieving their goals.”

CSU America Reads and Viking Corps employs around 100 students each academic year who average between 8,000 and 12,000 hours of tutoring and community service. Over its two decades of existence, the program has worked with close to 20 organizational partners to employ over 2,100 CSU students, reaching tens of thousands of school children. It has also received \$2 million dollars in support through grants from community partners which has assisted in expanding the initiative and enabled the inclusion of non-Federal Work Study students in the program.

“We appreciate having CSU tutors work with our students,” says Caroline Peak, manager of the Collinwood Branch of the Cleveland Public Library. “They provide much needed support and assistance in math and reading but go beyond tutoring by talking, playing and interacting with the children, serving as mentors as well as tutors.”

CSU also used America Reads as the model for the broader Viking Corps program through the Office of Civic Engagement directed by Julian Rogers. Viking Corps offers CSU students Federal Work Study employment with other non-profit organizations throughout the community and offers opportunities more closely related to a student’s major, with partners such as AmeriCorps and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Cleveland.

“Having the support of CSU students is a tremendous resource,” adds Ron Soeder, president of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Cleveland. “We can provide better services to our kids,

while presenting role models that will help the next generation realize that they too can get a college degree.”

Learn more about [America Reads at CSU](#). Learn more about [Viking Corps](#).

**About Cleveland State University**

Founded in 1964, Cleveland State University is a public research institution that provides a dynamic setting for Engaged Learning. With 17,000-plus students, ten colleges and schools and more than 175 academic programs, CSU was again chosen for 2018 as one of America’s best universities by U.S. News & World Report. Find more information at [www.csuohio.edu](http://www.csuohio.edu).

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