SAIL (Summer Adventures in Learning) Will Celebrate the Importance of Summer Learning in Birmingham and the Black Belt Region

Event Marking National Summer Learning Day on July 14, 2016 Will Be One of Hundreds Across the Nation Aimed at Keeping Kids Learning, Healthy and Safe this Summer

Birmingham, AL – SAIL (Summer Adventures in Learning), in partnership with the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), will highlight the importance of summer learning opportunities at programs funded by the collaborative. On July 14, summer learning programs in the Birmingham area and the Black Belt Region associated with the SAIL Collaborative, a partnership of 11 funders, will celebrate National Summer Learning Day. The purpose of the celebration is to highlight the importance of keeping kids learning, safe and healthy every summer. This summer, the SAIL Collaborative provided grants totaling more than $862,000 to 36 schools and non-profits in Alabama, with an aim of maintaining and reinforcing some of the state's most effective summer education programs. National Summer Learning Day events in Alabama will coincide with over 300 events across the country.

National studies have shown that many students lose an alarming amount of educational progress over summer vacation, and typically return to school one to three months behind where they were at the end of the previous school year [citation]. Furthermore, data show that summer learning loss accounts for nearly two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap in reading [citation]. However, research has suggested that the effects of participation in a summer learning program can benefit children for at least two years afterwards [citation]. Local experience in Birmingham shows that as programs gain experience, participants can expect average gains of two to four months of progress in reading and math during a five to six-week program, making a significant positive difference for these children.

Over the past four years, the SAIL Collaborative or SAIL (Summer Adventures in Learning), a partnership of funders hosted by the Birmingham Education Foundation, has invested over $2,800,000 to create a network of high quality summer learning programs for local, low-income youth. The funders of this partnership committed to using a standardized application process for nonprofit organizations seeking to receive grant support to enhance or add consistent academic components to summer youth programs. "We were definitely pleased to see that these summer learning programs are closing the learning gap for low-income children," said Jim Wooten, board chairman of the partnership. "SAIL is a unique collaboration of funders, program hosts, educational services providers and other organizations with an interest in education. The funders write checks, but we do much more, and all the SAIL partners collaborate to strengthen one another and to give our children the opportunity for a better life."

According to Carol Butler, member of the SAIL board and executive director of the Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation, "We began working two years ago with summer learning programs such as Sawyerville Day Camp and Higher Achievement Summer School. This year we are collaborating with the Black Belt Community Foundation to expand those opportunities by adding four new program hosts in Dallas, Monroe, and Wilcox counties."

SAIL programs follow a "school within a camp" model, which aims to benefit the whole child, providing academic programming (with a high teacher to student ratio), physical activity, healthful meals, enrichment programming, and an emphasis on character development. Programs use standardized pre- and post-assessments to measure academic progress for all students. Data from these tests are analyzed by PARCA (Public Affairs Council of Alabama). Mature programs typically record gains of 2-3 months in reading and 2-3 months in math over the summer (4-6 week sessions), as compared to the 2-3 month losses expected for children who do not participate.

National Summer Learning Day Schedule of Events in Birmingham

On July 14, in association with SAIL partner Better Basics, volunteers from the Junior League of Birmingham will deliver books to students in summer programs so that they can build their home libraries and continue their reading when camp is over. In addition, several sites will be available for tours.

Camp Tour at 9:00 am: Summer Advantage USA is a nationwide summer education program, offered locally at Henry J. Oliver Elementary in the Crestwood neighborhood of Birmingham. Students engage in rigorous literacy and math programming in the mornings, and enrichment activities such as art, music, and gym in the afternoons. The program lasts five weeks, and has been recognized for its excellence by TIME Magazine and the White House. (map)

Camp Tour at 11:00 am: SOLE Program at Tarrant Elementary School Location: 1261 Etna Street, Tarrant (map) The SOLE (Self Organized Learning Environment) Summer Program is a six-week session offered to seventh-to-ninth graders in the Tarrant City Schools system. Through a partnership with Creative Exchanges Initiative (CEI), the program combines "self-organized learning environments" (SOLE), with "hands-on STEM opportunities" (Science Technology Engineering Math). The program is housed in a building behind Tarrant Elementary and 25 students are currently taking part.

The event is part of National Summer Learning Day, an advocacy day led by NSLA to elevate the importance of keeping kids learning, safe, and healthy every summer. In addition to Summer Learning Day, NSLA is partnering with the White House for the Summer Opportunity Project, an unprecedented multi-agency initiative designed to give young people access to their 'First Job,' and encourage investment in programs supporting summer learning and meals for America's young people in the summer. "Many kinds of high-quality learning opportunities during the summer can make a difference in keeping young people on track for success," said Sarah Pitcock, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association, "these opportunities can be found in schools and community organizations, including local libraries and museums, and in businesses, colleges and community colleges. Families play a critical role in nurturing a joy of learning at home with their kids."

About The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and advocates for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org.

The SAIL partners for 2016 grant cycle are: Alabama Power Foundation, The Belk Foundation, The Caring Foundation of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Daniel Foundation of Alabama, Independent Presbyterian Church Foundation, Joseph S. Bruno Charitable Foundation, The Junior League of Birmingham, Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation, Regions Bank and the United Way of Central Alabama.

About Birmingham Education Foundation: The mission of the Birmingham Education Foundation (ED) is to bring the voice of the community to Birmingham City Schools' leadership; to listen to and work alongside educators, students, and families; and to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for all students in the Greater Birmingham Community. In 2010, The Birmingham Education Foundation originated as an organization in response to a series of community conversations led by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham's Yes We Can! Birmingham Initiative. In 2016, ED began serving as the administrative backbone organization for SAIL, a project based on collective impact principles.