



## Raising A Reader MA Hosts Third Annual Leadership in Literacy Breakfast

October 10, 2017

### Event to Honor Cynthia Croatti, UniFirst EVP, and Robert A. DeLeo, Massachusetts Speaker of the House

BOSTON, Oct. 10, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Raising A Reader MA (RAR-MA, Inc.) will host its third annual Leadership in Literacy Breakfast, honoring and highlighting inspiring business leaders who utilize their influence to change lives through literacy and learning. This year's award recipient, Cynthia Croatti, executive vice president of UniFirst, is being recognized for her work in support of early literacy and her focus on corporation/nonprofit partnerships. Massachusetts Speaker of the House Robert A. DeLeo will also be honored as the Legislator of the Year for his contributions to early education and care initiatives.

This year's Leadership in Literacy Award Breakfast will take place Friday, October 27, 2017 from 7:30 a.m.–9:00 a.m. at the Mandarin Oriental in Boston. For additional information on the event, sponsorship opportunities, or to purchase tickets, [Click Here](#) or visit <https://www.501auctions.com/raisingareaderma/>.

The Leadership in Literacy Breakfast has raised over \$125,000 annually in recent years, helping provide families across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts access to a book rotation and share program, as well as access to parent education workshops. Corporate influencers from around the state will be in attendance at the event with a common goal of supporting early education initiatives that strengthen our families and communities. The event highlights the work being done by community leaders to end the cycle of low literacy rates.

Croatti's many contributions to the community are made evident with the recent partnership between Raising A Reader MA and UniFirst. The first of its kind, the program provides UniFirst employees access to the Raising A Reader MA Red Bag Book Rotation and Share Program. Participation in this program underscores the importance of early literacy in laying the foundation for a lifetime of learning. RAR-MA supports critical literacy efforts at a young age, as 90% of a child's brain develops by the age of five. Because most children's interaction at that age is with their parents, coupling access to books with parent education in a child's early years can measurably increase their academic success.

"The launch of our first corporate program validates our work to address the issue of low reading proficiency," said Christine Ward, executive director of Raising A Reader MA. "UniFirst is a philanthropic leader, focused on family and building a strong and inclusive corporate culture. This is just the beginning and we expect other corporations to follow, allowing otherwise isolated groups to be able to access our critical early literacy resources."

"We're honored to have Cynthia recognized with the Leadership in Literacy Award. Raising A Reader has created strong programs that allow families and caregivers to understand the important roles they play in early child development," said Adam Soreff, director of marketing and communications at UniFirst. "Cynthia has been a strong supporter of early literacy and corporate partnerships with nonprofits, and this award acknowledges her accomplishments and her continued focus on providing employee benefits that strengthen the current and future workforce," he added.

#### About Raising A Reader MA

Raising A Reader MA is an evidence-based early literacy program that helps families of young children (birth through age six) develop, practice, and maintain habits of reading together at home. Raising A Reader MA's core program increases access to books and offers support for strengthening the culture of reading at home. The model is driven by more than 25 years of research that shows the most significant factor impacting a child's academic success is being regularly read to by a parent or other primary adult caregiver before starting kindergarten.

#### About UniFirst Corporation

Headquartered in Wilmington, Mass., UniFirst Corporation (NYSE:UNF) is a North American leader in the supply and servicing of uniform and workwear programs, as well as the delivery of facility service programs. Together with its subsidiaries, the company also provides first aid and safety products, and manages specialized garment programs for the cleanroom and nuclear industries. UniFirst manufactures its own branded workwear, protective clothing, and floorcare products, and with 250 service locations, over 300,000 customer locations, and 14,000 employee Team Partners, the company outfits nearly 2 million workers each business day. For more information, contact UniFirst at 800.455.7654 or visit [UniFirst.com](http://UniFirst.com).

#### CONTACTS:

Adam Soreff  
UniFirst, Director of Communications  
978.527.4349  
[asoreff@unifirst.com](mailto:asoreff@unifirst.com)

Christine Ward  
Raising A Reader MA  
617.292.2665  
[christine@raisingareaderma.org](mailto:christine@raisingareaderma.org)

