



NATIONAL READING CAMPAIGN ENCOURAGES PARENTS TO HELP CHILDREN FALL IN LOVE WITH READING

QF Initiative Enchants Qatari Children With Culturally Relevant Reading Material

Doha, Qatar, 11 June 2016: Reading is the cornerstone of early cognitive development. It encourages a range of skills, including emotional intelligence, creativity, vocabulary and analytical thinking. It is for this reason that Qatar Foundation (QF), along with several other partners, recently launched the National Reading Campaign, which aims to nurture a book-loving culture from an early age, whilst activating a lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Championed by Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation, the National Reading Campaign places great emphasis on the role of parents in shaping their children's future. The year-long campaign aims to empower and support families in Qatar, offering the necessary guidance and support to help them inspire and share a passionate love for reading.

"As a child's first teacher, parents play a crucial role in their childhood development," explained Her Excellency Sheikha Hind. "In addition to shaping how they view and interact with the world around them, parents are responsible for laying the building blocks for learning, curiosity, behaviour and wellbeing. Reading aloud to children strengthens bonds, creates invaluable memories and reinforces family ties."

"The National Reading Campaign serves as a platform which aims to encourage local entities to work collectively, under one umbrella, to achieve a shared goal. We, along with our partners and stakeholders, are dedicated to empowering the next generation to reach their full potential, so they can grow up to be active citizens and inspirational leaders. And, we believe, this begins with a passionate commitment to early development," Her Excellency concluded.

Apart from raising awareness about the importance of reading, the campaign is designed to show the community that reading can be both fun and captivating, and not just purely academic. In addition, the campaign empowers parents and educators by offering them the support they need to adopt best practices that will inspire children to read, while cultivating self-learning and curiosity.

An integral part of the campaign is also to make books more easily accessible. QF, along with its partners, which include the Qatar National Library, Qatar Museums, Childhood Cultural Center, Maktaba, Khair Jalees, and AlFaisal Social Responsibility Center, is working to identify engaging Arabic books for children. These, in turn, will be made readily available



in libraries and bookstores across the country, providing access to culturally relevant content which helps to reinforce linguistic traditions.

Mr Fahad Saad Al Qahtani, President of Community Development, QF, commented on the campaign, saying: “One of the most important aspects of the National Reading Campaign is improving accessibility to relevant reading material, and this includes Arabic content. At present, most Arabic literature for children is translated from other languages, meaning the existing content and characters are not always relatable to children in this region. To address this challenge, the campaign is working to devise a homegrown approach, curating and identifying relevant age appropriate Arabic content.”

Since the launch of the campaign, a number of events and school visits have taken place across Qatar. Designed to engage parents and educators and to encourage them to play an active role in their children’s early development, the interactive events also help families create an environment conducive to parent-child bonding and learning.

Abdel Azim Al-Ali, who participated in a series of National Reading Campaign activities with his children, said: "Since I work full-time, I am only able to spend time with my daughters on the weekends. I’m grateful for the opportunity provided by the National Reading Campaign which enables me to spend quality time with my daughters and see them learn and grow while giving me an insight into their interests and the kind of books they enjoy reading. This campaign is an excellent initiative for parents to encourage children to read and share invaluable time together.”

The nationwide events, which have so far taken place at the Pearl, AlKhor Park, Ezdan Mall, the Gulf Mall and the Gate Mall, boast a wide range of exciting and fun-filled activities especially designed to appeal to the whole family. Some of the most popular activities include a Book Hangout, where children can dress up as their favourite storybook characters and act out specific scenes; a Book Swap, where visitors can exchange books; and Qatar’s first Story Maze, where children can discover different stories depending on the route chosen. Additional activities also include bookmark making and storytelling sessions, as well as games like Scrabble and oversized puzzles.

Nawal Al-Dosari, who has attended a number of the events, said: “I’m so happy to be given the opportunity to share in my daughter’s learning through the National Reading Campaign. She is three-years old and really enjoys the activities. The most important thing for me as a mother is to be involved in her learning process. The events hosted help children develop their skills in a fun and exciting atmosphere.”

In addition to the array of exciting festivities already taking place, more activities by the National Reading Campaign are coming up. For example, book vending machines will be strategically positioned throughout national schools, enabling children and the wider



community to swap books free of charge, and a mobile library, named the 'Reading Truck', will sell books and related merchandise and will be parked at schools and public spaces across the country. Pop up stores will also be set up in public spaces, offering children the opportunity to attend storytelling sessions, browse books and use specially-designed iPad applications created to enhance reading skills.

The National Reading Campaign events will take place on Thursdays, Saturdays and Tuesdays throughout Ramadan at the City Centre Mall, from 7:30PM until 11:30PM at the AlFaisal Social Responsibility Center booth. Bring your children and enjoy the book hangout, book swap, storyteller and bookmark making activities on offer.

For more information about the National Reading Campaign, as well as exclusive information and book recommendations in English and in Arabic, please visit:
<http://www.powerofreading.qa>

Image Captions:

Image 1: A wide variety of engaging books are available for children to read during National Reading Campaign events.

Image 2: Children are treated to a fun storytelling session during a National Reading Campaign event.

Image 3: Children go through an informative and interactive Book Maze at a National Reading Campaign event in Doha.

Image 4: Through a range of engaging activities the National Reading Campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of nurturing a love of reading from an early age.

Image 5: The National Reading Campaign is championed by Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation, as part of her role to promote education and learning in Qatar.

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Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organisation that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young



people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercialising solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community. For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>

About The National Reading Campaign

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) has collaborated with partners from across the country to launch the National Reading Campaign. Supported by Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, Vice Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of QF, the campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of reading, empower parents and educators, and guarantee access to culturally relevant reading material.