



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Cleveland Kids' Book Bank Announces Leadership Transition**

### **Co-Founder and Board Chair Judi Kovach Retires Following Transformational Decade of Service; Sandra Kiely Kolb Named Incoming Board Chair**

**Cleveland, OH (May 19, 2026)** - The Cleveland Kids' Book Bank (CKBB), a leading nonprofit dedicated to fostering literacy and a love of reading by providing free books to children, proudly announces the retirement of co-founder and longtime Board Chair Judi Kovach, whose visionary leadership helped build one of Northeast Ohio's most impactful literacy organizations. The organization also announces the appointment of Sandra Kiely Kolb as the new Chair of the Board of Directors.

Kovach officially retired from her board leadership role on May 15, 2026, during the organization's inaugural Annual Brunch in the Mandel Literacy Hub at the Kids' Book Bank's new home in the Jefferson-Puritas area.

Since co-founding Cleveland Kids' Book Bank in 2016 with former Executive Director, Judy Payne, Kovach has helped lead the organization from a grassroots effort into a nationally recognized literacy nonprofit that has distributed more than five million books to children across Greater Cleveland and beyond.

"Judi's leadership, compassion, and relentless belief in the power of books has changed the lives of countless children," said Natalie Friedl, Executive Director. "She built not only an organization, but a movement centered on dignity, literacy, and opportunity. We are profoundly grateful for the strong foundation she created."

Under Kovach's leadership, CKBB expanded its network to hundreds of community partners, developed innovative literacy distribution programs, and recently completed a transformational move into a permanent 24,000-square-foot headquarters designed to support long-term growth and regional impact.

As the organization enters its next chapter, the Board of Directors has selected Sandra Kiely Kolb to serve as Board Chair.

Kolb brings decades of executive leadership, financial expertise, and nonprofit governance experience to the role. A retired banking executive, she previously served in senior leadership positions at National City Bank, including Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer of Institutional Asset Management.



An active civic and nonprofit leader throughout Greater Cleveland, Kolb has chaired and served on numerous boards, including Ideastream Public Media, The Cleveland Play House, and Saint Luke's Foundation, among many others.

"Sandra's leadership experience, strategic mindset, and deep commitment to community make her an exceptional choice to guide the Cleveland Kids' Book Bank into the future," said Kovach. "I am incredibly confident in the organization's direction under her leadership."

Kolb said she is honored to continue the work established during the organization's first decade.

"Books change lives, and Cleveland Kids' Book Bank has become an essential part of our community's literacy ecosystem," said Kolb. "I am honored to follow Judi's extraordinary leadership and excited to help advance the organization's vision, so every child can grow up surrounded by books and inspired to read."

The leadership transition comes at a pivotal moment for CKBB as the organization launches its new strategic vision focused on dramatically expanding access to books and igniting literacy experiences across Greater Cleveland and beyond.

### **About the Cleveland Kids' Book Bank**

Since 2016, the nonprofit organization has been dedicated to ensuring that every child in Greater Cleveland has books in the home. Through its community-based partnerships, the Cleveland Kids' Book Bank has distributed more than five million new and gently used books to children, schools, and community organizations, helping to foster a love of reading and improving childhood literacy. The Kids' Book Bank moved into a 24,000 sq. ft. space in October 2026 after completing a successful \$2 million capital campaign in less than 12 months.

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