



For immediate release  
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## **State Senator Kathy Saltzman Receives 2009 Friend of Literacy Award**

Cottage Grove, Minn. – State Senator Kathy Saltzman received the 2009 Friend of Literacy Award from the Minnesota Reading Corps, an AmeriCorps program and statewide literacy initiative of ServeMinnesota. An education advocate, Senator Saltzman has been instrumental in garnering state funding for this effective program and authored two pieces of corresponding legislation in 2007 and 2009. Over the next two years, the current state appropriation of \$2.8 million will be matched with \$2.4 million in private funds and, together, these dollars will leverage \$17 million in federal funding to support the Minnesota Reading Corps. During that time, 1,000 AmeriCorps members will help 25,000 Minnesota students become successful readers.

“Minnesota Reading Corps blends the people power of AmeriCorps members with the science of how children learn to read,” said Audrey Suker, chief executive officer of ServeMinnesota. “Because of Sen. Saltzman’s leadership and dedication, this program has the widespread support needed to become a permanent part of Minnesota’s solution to help all its children read at grade level.”

The Minnesota Reading Corps has partnered with the South Washington County Schools and the Stillwater Area Schools – the predominant public school districts located in Saltzman’s district. In South Washington County, 130 students participated in the program and 47 in Stillwater. AmeriCorps members either serve directly with children to provide individualized literacy instruction or recruit community volunteer tutors to work one-on-one with children.

The evidenced-based, data driven program matches trained AmeriCorps members and community volunteers with children from age 3 to grade 3 who are at risk for not reading at grade level. For the past five years, outside evaluators found that pre-schoolers participating in the Minnesota Reading Corps program started kindergarten significantly more prepared in literacy skills than other children. Nearly 80 percent of participating children in grades K-3 acquired literacy skills at a rate that allowed them to reach grade level requirements. For more information, visit [www.MinnesotaReadingCorps.org](http://www.MinnesotaReadingCorps.org).

### **About ServeMinnesota**

ServeMinnesota is a catalyst for positive social change and community service, working with AmeriCorps members and community partners to meet critical needs in Minnesota. As a nonprofit organization, it recruits and supports thousands of individuals to improve the lives of Minnesotans by offering life-changing service opportunities that focus on education, affordable housing, employment, and the environment. It ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in federal funding among all 50 states. Since its creation in 1994, ServeMinnesota has mobilized nearly 10,000 AmeriCorps members who train and support more than 300,000 volunteers. Through special programs like the Minnesota Reading Corps and the new Minnesota Math Corps, ServeMinnesota works in partnership with schools and teachers to close the achievement gap and help struggling students become successful learners. For more information, visit [www.serveminnesota.org](http://www.serveminnesota.org).

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