

SOCIAL ISSUES

Americans Rank Illiteracy Greatest Threat To Youth

(NAPSA)—Americans place a high value on the importance of literacy. That's the news from a recent survey that found illiteracy is viewed as the greatest threat to American children's future.

The findings reveal that a full one-third of all Americans, when asked, identified illiteracy (33 percent) over other pressing social issues such as poverty (24 percent), health care (23 percent) and the environment (15 percent) as posing the greatest risk to youth.

Other notable findings include the fact that a majority of respondents (51 percent) consider reading to be the most important skill in a child's development—more essential than listening (30 percent), speaking (12 percent) and writing (four percent).

Furthermore, the lack of access to books was recognized as the leading cause of illiteracy in children by one out of five Americans (20 percent). In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Education, 61 percent of low-income families have no books in their homes for their children. Additionally, over 80 percent of the preschool and after-school programs serving at-risk children have no books at all.

The survey was sponsored by brokerage firm TD Waterhouse, which recently launched a nationwide online book drive for disadvantaged children and youth. The campaign was developed in partnership with First Book, a leading



Actor John Lithgow shares story time with children from a local Head Start program in support of placing more books in the hands of children in need nationwide.

literacy nonprofit organization, and Aidmatrix.

Actor John Lithgow, spokesman for First Book, says, "The TD Waterhouse book drive perfectly demonstrates how visionary corporate involvement in social issues can be creative, attractive, and most of all effective in reaching children in need. I loved reading with my own children, and this initiative means that many more children will be able to experience the magic of reading."

For more information on childhood illiteracy, visit the Web site www.firstbook.com.