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Read Across Oklahoma, the beloved preschool and early-grade literacy event, returns to the Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden on Tuesday, April 9 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This annual event features Oklahoma-author Kylan Mogg's enchanting children's book *The Forgetful Elephant* along with a variety of interactive learning stations for children of all ages to engage in throughout the Zoo.

The first 1,500 children who visit the Zoo on April 9 with paid admission or a Zoofriends membership pass will be gifted a complimentary book. For the families and classrooms unable to attend the event, a dedicated page on the Department of Libraries website will host a special Read Across Oklahoma video and online activities. Additionally, online participants will have the pleasure of glimpsing Zoo animals and their habitats in the featured video.

Read Across Oklahoma is part of the statewide My First Library program, an early literacy initiative coordinated by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. During one school year, the program distributes 1,600 books each month to early learning classrooms.

Early literacy lays the groundwork for a lifetime of learning, personal growth, and academic success. "By investing in early literacy initiatives and providing children with access to books and environments such as the Oklahoma City Zoo, we not only foster enrichment and lifelong learning through reading but also play a crucial role in preparing children for school and ensuring their success in academic pursuits," said Ashley Welke, director of services to libraries at the Oklahoma Department of Libraries.

“Read Across Oklahoma is one-of-a-kind celebration that the Zoo is proud to host,” said Candice Rennels, OKC Zoo’s director of public relations. “This is such a unique, positive experience for Oklahoma’s young learners to not only connect with wildlife but also build their skills and interest in reading through engaging activities.”

The Forgetful Elephant, authored and illustrated by Kylan Mogg, narrates the tale of a young elephant venturing far from home, encountering an array of animal characters on her quest to rediscover not just her way back, but also her courage. The book is available for purchase online at Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

Visit Oklahoma.gov/libraries/read to find the virtual activities. Families planning a visit to the Zoo can purchase their tickets at the gate in advance at okczoo.org/tickets. Families can also continue the reading adventure by visiting their local public library to find books and services for all ages.

Thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, 27 public schools from Oklahoma will be participating in the event. Read Across Oklahoma is sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, the Oklahoma City Zoo, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Target, Tinker Federal Credit Union, Capitol Hill Graffix, Krueger Charitable Foundation, Metropolitan Library System, Metro Technology Centers, Oklahoma Center for the Book, Oklahoma Complete Health, Oklahoma Literacy Coalition, North OKC Rotary Club, and WhizKids.

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The Oklahoma Department of Libraries is the official State Library of Oklahoma. It serves the information and records management needs of state government, assists with public library development, coordinates library and information technology projects for the state, and serves the general public through its specialized collections.

The Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden is located at the crossroads of I-44 and I-35. The Zoo is a proud member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the American Alliance of Museums, Oklahoma City’s Adventure District and an Adventure Road partner. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily with the last entry at 4:00 p.m. Regular admission is \$16 for adults

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and \$13 for children ages 3-11 and seniors ages 65 and over. Children two and under are admitted free. Visit okczoo.org for more information.

Kylan Mogg is an early childhood educator with an MFA in Creative Writing. He is also a published author and illustrator of children's books, including *The Lonely Troll*, *The Forgetful Elephant*, and *The Woodland Hedgehog*. In his free time, Kylan enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with family.