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January 19, 2001

For Immediate Release:

"THEO," STAR OF PBS' "BETWEEN THE LIONS," TO VISIT CHARLESTON LIBRARY

CHARLESTON – To demonstrate his appreciation for WEIU-TV's commitment to children's programming, "Theo," puppet and star of the PBS series, "Between the Lions," plans to meet with all interested children Tuesday, Jan. 23.

He, along with Norman Stiles, head writer for "Between the Lions," will visit the Charleston Public Library, 712 Sixth St., at 3:30 p.m. The visit will include a 20- to 30-minute reading by "Theo" and another 20- to 30-minute session for questions and answers.

"Between the Lions," which is shown on WEIU-TV, Channel 51, at both 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, features a family of feline librarians – Theo and Cleo – and their two cubs, Lionel and Leona. The series has been proven to help children learn to read through a fun-filled, variety-show format that delights children and adults alike. Literature leaps to life in the lions' magical library where anything can happen!

The series, readying for its second season with 25 new half-hour episodes, has been proven to significantly improve early reading skills. A University of Kansas study indicated that kindergarteners who watched as few as 8½ hours of "Between the Lions" raised their test scores 64 percent in many

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early reading skills, while those who did not watch the program raised their scores by 25 percent. The study also confirms the show's entertainment appeal: 95 percent of participating kindergarteners said they liked the show, and a significant portion ranked it as their favorite.

The colorful cast of "Between the Lions" helps "Theo" and "Cleo" sort out various aspects of the business of reading. "Click the Mouse" keeps up with technology; "Cliff Hanger" uses reading skills to get out of (and back into) sticky situations; "Heath the Thesaurus" runs the reference department and spits out synonyms at will; "Makeba," the "What's Your Name?" rapper, brings a hip-hop feel to learning; while "Martha Reader and the Vowelles" puts soul into phonics.

New characters happening by the magical library during the coming season include "The Lone Re-arranger," a cowboy, who sorts out confusing sentences, and "Gus," a rabbit who can jump higher than anyone in Lionel's class but who cannot clear the hurdle of learning to read.

Norman Stiles, former head writer on *Sesame Street*, supervised a writing staff of 15 to 20 writers, guiding the writing of more than 2,000 scripts. He conceived, co-conceived or supervised the development of characters such as Count Von Count, Forgetful Jones, Sonny Friendly, H. Ross Parrot, Placido Flamingo and Elmo, among others, and has written more than 100 scripts for *Sesame Street*, winning 11 Emmy Awards.

Find out more about "Between the Lions" at <http://www.pbskids.org/lions>.