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## For Immediate Release



*Pictured left to right: Orlando Magic CEO/Vice Chair Bob Vander Weide, Education Foundation Osceola Bookmark Buddies Program Administrator Jamie Domres, Magic VP of Community Relations/Government Affairs Linda Landman Gonzalez, Magic President Alex Martins.*

## **\$20,000 Grant from Orlando Magic!**

**February 7, 2011–Kissimmee, FL:** The Orlando Magic Youth Fund, a fund of the McCormick Foundation has generously awarded a grant to the Education Foundation~Osceola County in the amount of \$20,000. Funding for this grant will be used to help third grade students in Osceola County raise their reading levels and prevent them from being retained. Bookmark Buddies is a literacy program designed to improve children's reading skills. The program began in five schools with 35 students and is presently assisting over 300 students with 250 volunteer mentors serving 20 elementary schools. Also, the Bookmark Buddies Mentoring Program has printed and distributed over 4,000 Reading A-Z books to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students!

The Education Foundation has offered the Bookmark Buddies Literacy program in partnership with The School District of Osceola County for approximately nine years. Bookmark Buddies targets third grade students who read below grade level and are at risk of scoring a Level 1 on the FCAT. Students are matched with a trained volunteer mentor and meet once a week for thirty minutes in the child's school using reading materials selected for the child's current reading level. The mentor/student relationships

are monitored throughout the school year to ensure students are adequately progressing and benefiting from participation in the program.

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The **Education Foundation-Osceola County** is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting public education, teachers and students. Led by a volunteer board of directors, the Foundation currently awards over one-hundred thirty (\$2,000) scholarships each year to Osceola County graduates. Other important accomplishments include matching children with mentors through the Take Stock in Children and Bookmark Buddies programs, providing classroom supplies to needy students and eligible teachers at no cost through a teacher free store, as well as providing classroom project grants and hosting special appreciation events for Osceola County educators and students. Visit our Web site at [www.foundationosceola.org](http://www.foundationosceola.org) for more information.