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**For More Information Contact:**  
Pat McGuckin: 217-558-4029  
Rachel Farrer: 312-814-2599

**Jesse White Announces Illinois Winners of “Letters About Literature” Contest**  
*Two Illinois Winners Also Claim National Honors*

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White has announced that students from Naperville, Springfield and Hudson are the Illinois winners of the 2013 “Letters About Literature” contest. “Letters About Literature” is a national reading and writing promotion for students sponsored by the Illinois State Library and Illinois Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. White honored the winners today at a ceremony in his Springfield office.

“These three talented young readers were among nearly 6,000 Illinois students who took part in this year's contest,” said White. “For the sixth year in a row, Illinois had more entries than any state in the nation. I am extremely proud of all of the students who took part, as they display how they are developing a lifelong love of reading and learning.”

In order to participate in the competition, students in grades 4-10 must read a book and write a personal letter to an author, explaining how the book changed their views of the world and/or themselves. Students may select authors, living or deceased, from any genre, fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. The Illinois Center for the Book appointed judges who selected the top essayists on three competition levels.

This year's Illinois winners are:

- Level I Grades 4-6: **Rose Yuanhong Benas** of Naperville, who wrote to author Steven Mosher about his book, *A Mother's Ordeal: One Woman's Fight Against China's One-Child Policy*. Rose is a student at Avery Coonley School in Downers Grove whose letter was submitted by teacher **Dana Taylor**.
- Level II Grades 7-8: **Abigail Rockford** of Springfield, who wrote to author Shermain Joy Lipao about the poem *Hope Behind The Shadows Of Pain*. Abigail attends Ball Charter School in Springfield, and her letter was submitted by teacher **Jeff Lynn**.
- Level III Grades 9-10: **Emily Waller** of Hudson, who wrote to Laura Ruby about her novel *The Wall and the Wing*. Emily attends Normal Community West High School and her letter was submitted by teacher **Nathaniel Haywood**.

(Read the winning essays at <http://illinoiscenterforthebook.org/projects/projectse.html>.)

Each of the winners received a \$100 check from the Illinois Center for the Book, a plaque signed by Secretary White, a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield and a lunch at the Illinois State Library. Teachers received a \$100 check from the Illinois Center for the Book to purchase books for their school library, a certificate signed by Secretary White, a tour of the Lincoln Presidential Museum and lunch at the State Library.

Additionally, Rose and Emily were National Letters About Literature winners. Their entries were judged against winning entries from other states. Rose was a 2<sup>nd</sup> place National winner in Grades 4-6 and received \$150 from the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Emily won 1<sup>st</sup> Place in Grades 9-12 and received \$1,000 from the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

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