



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

For Immediate Release:
September 2, 2004

For More Information Contact:
Pat McGuckin
Randy Nehrt

SECRETARY OF STATE JESSE WHITE INVITES YOUNG READERS TO ENTER LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE CONTEST

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White is encouraging students in grades 4 through 12 to enter the annual Letters about Literature contest sponsored by the Illinois Center for the Book, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and Target Stores.

To enter, readers write a personal letter to an author, living or dead, from any genre-- fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic--explaining how that author's work changed the student's way of thinking about the world or themselves. The Illinois Center for the Book will select the top essayists in the state on each of the three competition levels: Level I for children in grades 4 through 6; Level II for grades 7 and 8, and Level III, grades 9 - 12.

“Every year thousands of young Illinois readers enter the Letters About Literature contest, and I hope we will surpass the more than 4,000 entries received for last year’s contest,” said White, who also serves as honorary chairman of the Illinois Center for the Book. “It is a thrill to see so many young people participating, and I hope their involvement leads to a lifelong love of reading.

“Letters About Literature is a terrific way for young people to express themselves and learn how books can touch their emotions and impact their lives. I encourage all Illinois students in grades 4 through 12 to take part in this innovative reading initiative.”

At the state level, the winning essayist on each competition level will receive a cash award from the Illinois Center for the Book, a \$50 Target Gift Card, and a plaque from Secretary White. The first-place winners will then advance for national judging. Two national winners will be selected on each competition level. Those six national winners will each receive a \$500 gift card from Target Stores. Target Stores will also sponsor travel to the 2005 National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., for the winners, their parents/guardians, and one of their teachers. The national winners will read their winning letters during the festival, and will tour sites within the nation's capitol.

White said the deadline for entries is December 4, 2004. All state and national winners will be notified by April 1, 2005. Contestant participation guidelines and entry coupons have been mailed to all Illinois schools housing grades 4-12. A teacher guide along with additional entry coupons and contest participation guidelines are available by calling the Illinois Center for the Book at 217-558-2065, or at the ICB website at

http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/who_we_are/icb.html.

###