



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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White Announces Illinois Winners of 2005 Letters About Literature Contest

SPRINGFIELD — Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White has announced the Illinois winners of the annual Letters About Literature contest presented by The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, in partnership with Target Stores and sponsored by the Illinois Center for the Book.

The contest is a national reading and writing program for children and young adults. Participants write a personal letter to an author, explaining how his or her work changed their views of the world or themselves. Readers may select authors from any genre--fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. The Illinois Center for the Book appointed judges who selected the top essayists in the state on each of three competition levels. This year's winners are:

- Level I, for children in grades 4 through 6, **Mitchell Deck of Peoria**, who wrote his letter to Keith Brandt, author of *Lou Gehrig - Pride of the Yankees*. Mitchell is in the fourth grade at Holy Family Parish School in Peoria.
- Level II, for grades 7 and 8, **Joycelyn Garibay of Glendale Heights**, who wrote her letter to Steven Levenkron, author of *The Luckiest Girl in the World*. Joycelyn is in the eighth grade at Marquardt Middle School in Glendale Heights.
- Level III, for grades 9 – 12, **Matthew Levine of Evanston**, who wrote his letter to Lance Armstrong, author of *It's Not About the Bike*. Matthew is in the 12th grade at Evanston Township High School.

"I am proud and honored to congratulate these three talented, young readers, who were among 2,500 students from Illinois who participated in this innovative reading initiative," said White, who also serves as honorary chair of the Illinois Center for the Book. "Though only these three students advance to national competition, all of the students who participated are winners because they are taking part in the joy and magic of reading. It is gratifying to see so many young people reading."

The three winning students each receive a \$100 cash award, a \$50 Target Gift card and a plaque. An awards ceremony and luncheon for the winners will be held May 5 in Chicago, where they will get to meet Secretary White. The three state level first place winners also advance for national judging in which two national winners will be selected from each competition level. Target Stores will send the six national winners, two parents/guardians and one teacher to Washington, D.C. to attend the National Book Festival this fall. The national winners will read their winning letters during the festival. Each national winner also receives a \$500 Target Gift card.

The Illinois Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, is a non-profit organization promoting books, book arts, libraries and reading in Illinois. Established in 1985, the organization's mission is to celebrate the printed word and to create in Illinois an environment that promotes reading, the book arts and an appreciation of the state's rich literary heritage.

Target Stores, along with its parent company Target Corporation (NYSE:TGT), gives back more than \$2 million a week to its local communities through grants and special programs. Since opening its first store in 1962, Target has partnered with nonprofit organizations, guests and team members to help meet community needs.