



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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JESSE WHITE LAUNCHES “THE BIG READ” IN WEST CENTRAL ILLINOIS *FEATURING RAY BRADBURY CLASSIC FAHRENHEIT 451*

SPRINGFIELD—Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White announced that Illinois native Ray Bradbury’s classic science fiction novel *Fahrenheit 451* has been selected for “The Big Read,” a campaign involving west central Illinois libraries, schools and other community organizations joining together to read, discuss, and celebrate the book and promote the importance of reading.

“I am delighted that the Illinois State Library can take part in a campaign that stretches across west central Illinois to promote the importance and enjoyment of reading,” said White. “I want to thank Springfield Mayor Tim Davlin and all of the “Together We Read” library representatives for helping to make “The Big Read” a reality. I firmly believe that learning is a lifelong process, and that reading classic novels such as *Fahrenheit 451* enriches our lives, helps develop critical thinking and leads us to exciting new cultural horizons.”

Fahrenheit 451, which has become a literary classic since its 1953 release, is a cautionary tale about a media-obsessed society where citizens have stopped reading. It has become required reading in most high school classrooms, and occasionally turns up on lists of “banned” books because of its controversial themes related to censorship, freedom of expression and the effects of television and technology on society.

“The Big Read” will run until mid-November and involves activities such as read-a-thons, book discussions, lectures, movie screenings, and performing arts events. “The Big Read” in west central Illinois is made possible by a \$20,000 grant awarded to the Illinois State Library from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

The book was chosen to honor Bradbury because he is a Waukegan, Illinois native and one of 35 Illinois authors whose names are engraved on the fourth floor frieze of the State Library. The Illinois Center for the Book, for which White serves as honorary co-chair, will present Bradbury with the Illinois Literary Heritage Award as part of “The Big Read” activities.

White also thanked the many organizations taking part in “The Big Read” in west central Illinois, including: the Illinois Center for the Book; Network Knowledge public television stations (WSEC/WMEC/WQEC); the Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service; Macomb Public Library District; Jacksonville Public Library; Alliance Library System; Lincoln Library (Springfield’s public library); University of Illinois at Springfield Brookens Library; Rochester Public Library District; Chatham Area Public Library District; Rolling Prairie Library System; Sherman Public Library District; Quincy Public Library; Beardstown Public Library; Springfield Urban League; Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce; Barnes & Noble Booksellers; Sam’s

Club; Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin High School and Springfield School District 186.

A website with complete details of the west central Illinois campaign is located at the Illinois Center for the Book's website at <http://www.icftb.org/bigread/>. Additional information can be found at www.neabigread.org.

Other Illinois libraries and organizations that received NEA grants for local "The Big Read" campaigns include Aurora Public Library; Bartlett Public Library District, Spoon River College Foundation of Canton; Champaign Public Library; Columbia College Chicago; DeKalb Public Library; Galesburg Public Library; Rend Lake College in Ina; Acorn Public Library District, Oak Forest; Peoria Public Library and Sterling Public Library.

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts-both new and established-bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit www.arts.gov.

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