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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

For Immediate Release:
February 9, 2011

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Jesse White to Help Kick Off *The Big Read in Central Illinois*

SPRINGFIELD—Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois State Library are joining libraries and other educational and cultural institutions throughout central Illinois participating in *The Big Read in Central Illinois*, a campaign in which readers join together to read, discuss, and celebrate a book and promote reading. *The Big Read in Central Illinois* is highlighting *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, the classic 1940 debut novel by author Carson McCullers.

“I am proud to join my fellow librarians in showcasing and promoting the joy of reading as we launch our second *Big Read in Central Illinois*,” White said. “Two years ago we highlighted Ray Bradbury’s classic novel *Fahrenheit 451*. The new *Big Read* will feature book discussions, movie screenings, trivia nights, book giveaways and other events spotlighting another classic American novel *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. I hope all book lovers in central Illinois, especially high school and college students, will take part in our *Big Read* activities and celebrate the magic of reading.”

The Heart is a Lonely Hunter explores the isolation of misfits and outcasts of the South, and was the first in a string of works by McCullers to give a voice to the rejected, forgotten, mistreated and oppressed. Participants in *The Big Read* will examine a few of the themes covered in the book, including communication, the Great Depression, isolation and music. The themes will be interwoven into various programs and events taking place at different venues throughout Central Illinois.

The official kick-off for *The Big Read in Central Illinois* will be Tuesday, February 15th from 6-8:30 p.m. at the University of Illinois Springfield Studio Theatre. The evening will showcase the musical styles that inspired *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* with performances by two musical groups (Prairieland Voices and the Sangamon Valley Youth Symphony), an awards ceremony for the winners of the "Under the Influence: Music that Inspires Expression Contest", refreshments and information tables from the participating groups involved in *The Big Read in Central Illinois*.

Complete information and the entire list of events for *The Big Read in Central Illinois* can be found at <http://www.icftb.org/bigread/>. Citizens are encouraged to attend any event, even if it is not held in their home community.

Joining the Illinois State Library and Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service as partners in *The Big Read in Central Illinois* are: Benedictine University, Charles E. Becker Library; Chatham Area Public Library; Illinois Center for the Book; Jacksonville Public Library; Lincoln Library, the Public Library of Springfield, Illinois; Prairie Skies Public Library District; Quiddity International Literary Journal and Public Radio Program; Rochester Public Library; Sherman Public Library District; University of Illinois Springfield, Brookens Library; Williamsville High School Library; and Williamsville Public Library.

The Big Read is a nationwide reading initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The NEA presents *The Big Read* in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest, and with different community partners across the country to provide engaging educational resources for discussing outstanding literature.