



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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For More Information Contact:
Pat McGuckin
Randy Nehrt

SECRETARY OF STATE JESSE WHITE URGES 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/Library of Congress and Target Stores.

To enter, readers write a personal letter to an author, living or deceased, 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.

“Letters About Literature has proven to be extremely popular with Illinois students and teachers over the years,” said White, who also serves as honorary chairman of the Illinois Center for the Book. “I am delighted that thousands of young people participate each year, and I hope their involvement leads to a lifelong love of reading. Letters About Literature is a great way for young people to express themselves and learn how books can have a strong emotional impact on their lives. I encourage all Illinois students in grades 4 through 12 to take part in this valuable 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, a plaque and will have the opportunity to meet Secretary White. The first-place winners will then advance for national judging. Two national winners will be selected on each competition level. These six national winners will each receive a \$500 gift card from Target Stores. Target Stores will also sponsor travel to the 2006 National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., for the winners and their parents/guardians. 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 1, 2005. All state and national winners will be notified in March, 2006. 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 at www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/letters-teachersguide.html. For further information, contact the Illinois Center for the Book at 217-558-2065, or check the ICB website at http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/who_we_are/icb.html.

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.

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