



For Immediate Release, May 21, 2014

West Virginia Youth Celebrate Their Favorite Authors with *Letters About Literature*

Charleston, WV. In the State Culture Center on Tuesday, May 27, at 2:00 PM, West Virginia will honor a group of young readers who wrote letters to their favorite authors in a program called Letters About Literature, a national writing challenge for students in grades 4 through 10.

Young readers participate in Letters About Literature by writing letters to the authors of their favorite books, fiction or non-fiction, explaining how the author's work has been important to them. Entrants, who must be at least nine years old, are grouped for evaluation: Grades 4-6 are level 1, grades 7-8 are Level 2, and grades 9-10 are Level 3.

Approximately 69,000 students across the nation competed in the event this year. In West Virginia, 776 students submitted letters to the 2014 competition. Six judges from across the state evaluated the letters and awarded top honors, honors, honorable mention and notable mention awards to 164 entrants.

The West Virginia Humanities Council, co-sponsor of the event, will award \$100 to each top honors winner and \$50 to each honors winner. State winners will go on to the national competition, where the top prize is \$1,000.

One student won top honors for each of the three levels.

Level 1 winner Heavenly Adkins of St. Albans, WV, wrote to Audrey Penn about her book *The Kissing Hand*: "Now, I am eleven years old, and I am in fourth grade. Even though your book is for little kids, I still carry my feelings that your book gave to me always."

Level 2 winner Ace Lipscomb of Princeton, WV, wrote to Corrie Ten Boom about her autobiography *The Hiding Place*: "After reading your book I let all of my ancient grudges go. Like forgiveness, making the best of the situation does not come all that easy to me."

Level 3 winner Cedar Sands of New Martinsville, WV, wrote to J.R.R. Tolkien about *The Hobbit*: "I was living like a hobbit. I was not going out of my hobbit-hole, much less the Shire. I was not going out there exploring Middle Earth and all its wonders because of one little thing, worry."

"I'm thrilled to learn there are children who have written letters to authors who have influenced them," said this year's featured speaker, Colleen Anderson, author of *Missing: Mrs. Cornblossom* and other books. "For the event, I've written my own letter to Kenneth Grahame,

author of *The Wind in the Willows*. What a feeling of humanity the book has, although there are no humans in it. The book influenced me to begin writing my own children's books."

Mark Payne, Program Officer of the West Virginia Humanities Council, will present the awards. Karen Goff, Secretary of the West Virginia Library Commission, will make the opening and closing remarks.

The West Virginia Center for the Book at the West Virginia Library Commission, in partnership with the West Virginia Humanities Council, sponsors Letters About Literature annually in the state. The awards ceremony is held each spring in Charleston.

The West Virginia Center for the Book at the West Virginia Library Association, an affiliate of the National Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, fosters an appreciation of the literature that shapes our lives daily. Through programs such as Letters About Literature, it helps West Virginians further appreciate books and literature while promoting our state's rich literary heritage.

The West Virginia Library Commission serves the people of West Virginia and encourages lifelong learning, individual empowerment, civic engagement and an enriched quality of life by enhancing library and information services for all West Virginians. More information is available at www.librarycommission.wv.gov.

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