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White Announces Illinois Winners Of 2007 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 Letters About Literature contest is a national reading and writing program for children and teenagers. 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, living or deceased, from any genre--fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. The Illinois Center for the Book (www.illinoiscenterforthebook.org) appointed judges who selected the top essayists on three competition levels. This year's winners are:

- Level I, for children in grades 4 through 6, **Jori Goldberg of Burr Ridge**. Jori wrote her letter to Deborah Wiles, author of the book *Each Little Bird that Sings*. Jori attends Avery Coonley School in Downers Grove.
- Level II, for grades 7 and 8, **Alejandra Ruiz of Schaumburg**. Alejandra wrote her letter to Pam Munoz Ryan, author of *Esperanza Rising*. Alejandara is a student at Keller Jr. High School in Schaumburg.
- Level III, for grades 9 – 12, **Faye Cheng of Oak Brook**. Faye wrote her letter to Alexandra Robbins, author of *The Overachievers*. Faye attends Hinsdale Central High School in Hinsdale

"I am honored to congratulate these three talented young readers, who were among more than 3,500 Illinois students who took part in this year's Letters About Literature contest," said Secretary White, who also serves as honorary chair of the Illinois Center for the Book. "Though only these three students will advance to national competition, all of the students who took part are winners because they are immersing themselves in the magic and joy of reading. I am confident their participation will help these young people develop a lifelong love of reading and learning."

The three Illinois winners, who now advance to national competition, will meet Secretary White at a later date to receive several awards, including a \$50 gift card from Target, a \$150 check from ICB, and a plaque signed by Secretary White. For the first time, each winner's school will also receive a \$50 check from ICB.

In the national competition, two 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 in September. The national winners will read their winning letters during the festival. Each national winner also receives a \$500 Target Gift card.

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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