

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**National Book Foundation Announces Winners of its First
Innovations in Reading Prize:**

*Winners Include a Teacher, a Best-selling Author's Website,
a Reading Program in a Correctional Facility,
a Public Library System, and an Online Community for Teens*

New York, NY, May 5, 2009 - The Board of the National Book Foundation has awarded its first Innovations in Reading Prizes to one individual and four organizations who are demonstrating passion, creativity, dedication, and leadership in the service of creating and sustaining a lifelong love of reading. The winners include: a teacher; an online resource created by best-selling author James Patterson and literary consultant Judy Freeman that helps identify books for kids; a program that allows inmates to read to their children via CDs that are mailed home bi-monthly; an online book community for teens girls that uses social networking; and a Dewey-less public library. The winners hail from Eloy Arizona; Gilbert, Arizona; Santa Fe, New Mexico; New York, NY; and Tacoma, Washington. Each winner will receive \$2,500.00 and a framed certificate.

Leslie Shipman, Director of Programs for the National Book Foundation states, "The Innovations in Reading Prize is the National Book Foundation's program to discover, promote, and, we hope, help replicate the innovative efforts of individuals and organizations who are sharing their passion for books and reading at the grassroots level, both in their communities and online. The enthusiasm and creativity shown by these five is remarkable. We hope other organizations across the country will be able to take these ideas and put them into practice in their own communities." *Innovations in Reading* is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

The Winners are:

Robert Wilder: Robert Wilder is both an elementary and high-school teacher in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the only individual to receive the prize. His creativity, commitment, and passion for sharing his love of books with his students are exceptional. He is a powerful example of the impact a single, devoted teacher can have on the lives of his students. "Books are my gesture toward a better life for anyone willing to turn some pages," Rob says. "Like many teachers and writers, I find myriad ways to get good books into other people's hands, whether it's a kindergartner struggling over his first sentence, a high-school student trying to find her voice in the wilderness of adolescence, or an intellectually starved friend at a dinner party."

James Patterson's ReadKiddoRead: ReadKiddoRead.com is a hassle-free online resource that helps parents, teachers, adults, and librarians identify books that kids will love. When Patterson found out that his son Jack did not share his passion for books, He took it upon himself to fix the situation by choosing books he knew his son would love. He even started writing books for kids to get Jack interested. The author's motivation led him to create ReadKiddoRead.com. "There are millions of kids who have never read a book they've liked. There are also thousands of children's books out there. This site lists the ones they won't be able to resist," Patterson says. Children's literature consultant Judy Freeman also works on the site, writing a bulk of the reviews. Even though the original target audience was to be grownups, kids are using the site as well. "We're ecstatic over winning this

recognition,” says Patterson. “The site is working. And with the National Book Foundation on our side, I hope many more adults will be inspired to take their kids’ reading habits into their own hands.”

Fathers Bridging the Miles: Fathers Bridging the Miles is a program of Read to Me International, a Hawaii-based non-profit devoted to children's literacy. The program provides children of incarcerated fathers in the Saguaro Correctional Center in Eloy, Arizona, with a unique and meaningful way to develop a love of reading by recording inmates reading children’s books onto CDs. The recorded reading and a copy of the book are mailed to their children bimonthly. This program works on many levels. Incarcerated men maintain a strong bond with their children through books, as well as improve their reading skills. Their children are able to hear their fathers read stories to them, despite the miles between them. According to Pat Mizuno, the Program Director, “It is amazing to see the relationships between fathers and their children bloom over books and reading. The children enjoy getting the books in the mail and love listening to their fathers’ voices. We know our program is having an impact when we meet former program participants after being paroled and they are still reading to their children!”

Maricopa County Library District: Maricopa County Library District of Gilbert, Arizona, dropped the Dewey system two years ago to make their library more user-friendly. Based on customers' surveys, Maricopa decided that organizing the library into “neighborhoods,” the way bookstores are organized, was a better way to meet customers’ needs, and as a result, circulation has doubled. Maricopa has received national attention as well, from the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *NPR*, that has opened a serious discussion about how libraries can best serve the needs of the reading public. “The library is customer centric,” states Harry R. Courtright, the Director. “The Innovation in Reading Prize for the Dewey-less approach to organizing libraries may inspire other libraries to also try new ways to get people to read.”

readergirlz: readergirlz is an online book community for teen girls that is designed to make reading hip, compelling, and fun, as well as to promote teen literacy and leadership. Their mission is to get teens to read, reflect, and reach out. Using social networking sites, YouTube, and other online resources, teens are able to chat with their favorite Young Adult authors. readergirlz is led by five Young Adult authors: Dia Calhoun, Holly Cupala, Lorie Ann Grover, Justina Chen Headley, and Melissa Walker. When told that readergirlz was one of five winners, Dia Calhoun, author and co-founder, stated, “With this amazing and generous Innovations in Reading Prize, readergirlz can continue to find new ways to connect teens with the best authors in young adult literature, making reading hip and appealing using the latest technology.”

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The Mission of the National Book Foundation is to celebrate the best of American literature, to expand its audience, and to enhance the cultural value of good writing in America.

About the *National Book Awards*

The nation’s most prestigious literary prize, the National Book Awards has a stellar record of identifying and rewarding quality writing. In 1950, William Carlos Williams was the first winner in Poetry, the following year William Faulkner was honored, and so on through the years. Many previous Winners of a National Book Award are now firmly established in the canon of American literature. On November 18th, the National Book Awards will be presented in the categories of Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, and Young People’s Literature.

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