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First Book

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First Book and Random House Celebrate “Literacy and Justice For All” in Louisiana and Across the Country

100,000 new books to benefit children in need

Washington, DC —July 10, 2006— First Book® and Random House Children's Books this week will distribute 50,000 books to literacy programs serving low-income children throughout Louisiana as part of the “Literacy and Justice For All” campaign conducted in partnership with BookExpo America in May. The distribution will take place at the United States Coast Guard warehouse in New Orleans on Thursday, July 13.

Additionally, in the true spirit of literacy and justice for all, Random House matched the Louisiana donation with an additional 50,000 books to be distributed in communities across the United States through the First Book National Book Bank.

First Book, a national nonprofit organization that provides new books to economically disadvantaged children, launched ‘Literacy and Justice For All’ during BookExpo America (BEA) in Washington, D.C. to help raise awareness about children's literacy issues in the United States. Convention attendees and visitors to the First Book Web site were encouraged to cast their votes for the state they thought should receive a special distribution of 50,000 new books. More than 12,000 votes were cast and Louisiana was the overwhelming winner.

“The Literacy and Justice For All’ campaign was a playful way to talk about a very serious issue,” said First Book president Kyle Zimmer. “A recent study indicates that there is only one book for every 300 children living in low-income neighborhoods, compared to 13 books for every one child living in middle income neighborhoods. We have to do something to close this gap if there is ever to be literacy and justice for all children in America,” Zimmer continued. “Thanks to partners like Random House and Reed Expo, and the 12,000 people who cast their ballots, 100,000 new books will soon be in the hands of needy children in Louisiana and communities across the country.”

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During the month of May, First Book partnered with the United States Coast Guard to feature public service announcements in the Washington, DC Metrorail and Metrobus systems highlighting the “Literacy and Justice For All” campaign. Posters encouraged passengers to go online and participate in the balloting. In addition, voting booths were set up during BEA where over 2,000 people from the book industry cast their votes.

"We are always eager to support First Book's good work, because the impact that this organization has on young people in our country is invaluable," commented Chip Gibson, President and Publisher of Random House Children's Books. "We are honored and grateful that First Book will be distributing our books to children in need throughout Louisiana this week."

Lance Fensterman, event director for BookExpo America noted, "BEA has been a proud supporter of First Book for the last five years and we are proud to help them put books into the hands of the most important readers in this country - young readers in need."

Members of First Book, along with United States Coast Guard volunteers and others from the local community will organize and pack the books at the warehouse in New Orleans. First Book is the signature charity of the United States Coast Guard, which provides logistical support and warehouse space across the country.

On Thursday, representatives from recipient literacy organizations will pick up the books that will then be distributed to schools, libraries and literacy programs in Louisiana and beyond.

About First Book

First Book is a national nonprofit organization that gives children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own their first new books. In neighborhoods across the country, First Book Advisory Boards unite leaders from all sectors of the community to identify the most effective community-based literacy programs reaching children living at or below the poverty line and provide them with First Book grants of free books and educational materials. The First Book National Book Bank, a subsidiary program of First Book, is the first centralized system that enables publishers to donate books and educational materials online to reach millions of children who need them the most. First Book has distributed more than 43 million new books to children in need in hundreds of communities nationwide. To learn more about First Book, please visit www.FirstBook.org.

About Random House Children's Books

Random House Children's Books is the largest English-language children's trade book publisher. Creating books for preschool children through young adult readers in all formats from board books to activity books to picture books and novels, Random House Children's Books brings together world-famous franchise characters, multimillion-copy series, and top-flight, award-winning authors and illustrators. Random House Children's Books is a division of Random House, Inc., a unit of the book division of Bertelsmann AG, a leading international media company.