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Library of Congress Honors First Book with 2015 David M. Rubenstein Literacy Award

WASHINGTON, October 27, 2015 – The Library of Congress has awarded First Book, a nonprofit social enterprise, with its prestigious David M. Rubenstein Prize for 2015. One of three Literacy Awards presented by the Library of Congress annually, the Rubenstein Prize is awarded to an organization that has made outstanding and measurable contributions in increasing literacy levels and has demonstrated exceptional and sustained depth and breadth in its commitment to the advancement of literacy. In addition, the award, which includes a \$150,000 cash prize, honors organizations that meet the highest standards of excellence in operations and services.

“First Book’s innovative models are bringing high quality, relevant books to support educators serving children in need – and bridging the literacy divide for millions of children,” said John Y. Cole, chair of the Library of Congress Literacy Awards and director of the Center for the Book. “This award recognizes the systemic change and depth of impact First Book continues to make in support of children’s literacy throughout the U.S. and Canada.”

Founded in 1992, First Book promotes educational equality by providing educators and programs serving children in need with access to free and affordable high-quality new books and educational resources. Through the First Book National Book Bank, the organization works with publishers to secure large donations of new children’s books, which are then distributed to classrooms and programs across the country. Eligible educators, librarians and program leaders can also obtain low-cost books and educational resources through the First Book Marketplace, an online site with over 6,000 products,, including a range of books and digital learning tools. To date, First Book has distributed more than 135 million books in the U.S. and Canada.



“Receiving the Rubenstein Prize is an enormous honor for which all of us at First Book are deeply grateful,” said Kyle Zimmer, president, CEO and co-founder of First Book. “It is especially meaningful coming from the Library of Congress, which shares our driving belief in enabling full access to knowledge and universal education. First Book’s work seeks to address the reality that millions of children here in the U.S. are growing up without books. Our nation’s libraries, schools and afterschool programs work tirelessly to improve the lives of the more than 32 million U.S. children growing up in low-income families, but they cannot do it alone. First Book is working across sectors to help unlock the power of books and literacy so that each and every child can achieve their potential.”

First Book provides a full range of educational resources for children in need ages 0-18, from picture books and graphic novels, to content on financial literacy, health and wellness, and college prep. First Book served as the catalyst for the first bilingual editions of children’s classics, *Goodnight Moon* and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. First Book has also created curated book collections matched with free downloadable teacher’s guides, making recent research accessible and usable for educators on topics

ranging from family engagement to building executive function and life skills. Responding to the needs of educators, First Book recently expanded its free and low-cost offerings to include school supplies and basic needs items, such as winter coats and non-perishable foods.

Insights from First Book's network of educators and program leaders, which recently surpassed more than 200,000 individuals, helps drive the content, formats and types of educational resources that the organization secures. For example, in a First Book survey, 90 percent of respondents indicated that children in their programs would be more enthusiastic readers if they had access to books with characters, stories and images that reflect their lives and their neighborhoods. In response, First Book launched its groundbreaking Stories for All Project™, a market-driven initiative bringing hundreds of thousands of diverse books featuring different cultures, ethnicities, languages, family structures, abilities and experiences to the First Book Marketplace and mainstream retail locations.

"By tackling the lack of resources in a systemic way, First Book has done more than any other organization to fuel learning and advance literacy," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. "First Book's innovative models, collaborative approach, and ability to harness the power of the market is in turn empowering our members, providing the basis for current and future curricula and engaging our students in reading. It is a solution that is fulfilling its promise of permanently improving the literacy and resource landscape for those serving children in need."

Organizations serving children in need can sign up to access First Book's resources at firstbook.org/join. For more information on First Book's work, visit firstbook.org.

About First Book

First Book is a nonprofit social enterprise that has distributed more than 135 million books and educational resources to programs and schools serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada. By making new, high-quality books and educational resources available on an ongoing basis, First Book is transforming the lives of children in need and elevating the quality of education. For more information, please visit us [online](#) or follow our latest news on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the Library of Congress

The Library of Congress, the nation's oldest federal cultural institution, is the world's preeminent reservoir of knowledge, providing unparalleled collections and integrated resources to Congress and the American people. Many of the Library's rich resources and treasures may be accessed through the Library's website, www.loc.gov.

Since its creation by Congress in 1977 to "stimulate public interest in books and reading," the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress (www.Read.gov/cfb/) has become a major national force for reading and literacy promotion. A public-private partnership, it sponsors educational programs that reach readers of all ages, nationally and internationally. The Center provides leadership for affiliated state centers for the book (including the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and nonprofit reading promotion partners and plays a key role in the Library's annual National Book Festival. It also oversees the Library's Read.gov website and administers both the Library's Young Readers Center and its Poetry and Literature Center.

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