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**PA's second annual early literacy program kicks off in March with author of
A Splendid Friend, Indeed, the 2007 One Book, Every Young Child selection**

HARRISBURG, PA (March 6, 2007) – A sneak preview to Pennsylvania's second annual **One Book, Every Young Child** early literacy program will feature the 2007 book selection's author at a launch/reception in the East Wing of the Pennsylvania State Capitol March 20, 4-6 p.m.

Suzanne Bloom, acclaimed author/illustrator of the 2007 book selection, *A Splendid Friend, Indeed*, will speak to a group representing the Pennsylvania Library Association, legislators and other community leaders about the importance of early literacy and her writing process.

She will read in her popular animated style to demonstrate how adults can make reading fun for children. She will speak and read first to the adults, then in a private room to a group of pre-schoolers.

Within a few months, over a half million Pennsylvania children ages 3-6 will be exposed to the joy of reading through the same beautifully illustrated picture book and the **One Book, Every Young Child** program that promotes the development of early literacy skills through interactive experiences with books and stories.

In its commitment to unlock the promise of literacy, a \$40,000 grant from Verizon Foundation provided a copy of *A Splendid Friend, Indeed* to the more than 15,000

Pennsylvania childcare facilities, licensed preschools, Head Start programs and family literacy programs.

“On behalf of Verizon, we are proud to partner with the Pennsylvania Library Association in this program which offers a fun learning experience for children,” said William B. Petersen, president of Verizon Pennsylvania. “Verizon believes we must assure that people gain the complex literacy skills needed across the lifespan, from early childhood through adulthood, to participate and compete in the 21st Century.”

A Splendid Friend, Indeed is the wonderful tale about a day in the life of a studious polar bear and an inquisitive goose that develop an unlikely but rewarding friendship. The bear reminds one of an older sibling or parent who is wrapped up in his own pursuits. The goose is the young child who wants to share in the elder’s activities. Goose finally gets Bear’s attention and the two walk away “splendid” friends.

A Splendid Friend, Indeed was a 2006 Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor Book award winner, named to the 2006 Texas 2x2 Reading List, named among New York Public Library’s 2005 List of Best Books to Read and Share and nominated for the Best Book Award, *Child Magazine*, 2005.

For the **One Book, Every Young Child** program, the book also will be published in Spanish, as well as in a board book version for younger children.

The Capitol launch event is a prelude to Bloom’s 22 days of visits across the state that start March 22, 11 a.m., at the Madeline L. Olewine Memorial Library, 2410 N. Third Street, Harrisburg. That evening, she will appear at 6:30 p.m. at the Joseph T. Simpson Public Library, 16 North Walnut Street, Mechanicsburg. A full listing of her visits will continually be updated on the website www.paonebook.org.

“A lot of children identify with inquisitive siblings in this story about a bear who basically wants to be left alone to read and write and think and the goose who keeps asking what he’s doing and says he can do that, too,” said Bloom. “I wrote the story with memories of my own experiences with my father.

“Children also learn they can be friends with those who might be very different than they are. I am thrilled to have this story of diversity, friendship, sharing, cooperation and conflict resolution shared with so many children across the state,” said Bloom.

The beauty of the **One Book, Every Young Child** program goes far beyond just giving parents and caregivers a book to read to preschoolers.

It emphasizes ways that adults can engage children in activities such as talking about a book's cover and illustrations, discussing the action in the book and favorite parts and making up pretend play games related to the story.

In its inaugural year, 2006, the **One Book, Every Young Child** program won a coveted national John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations award for its comprehensive approach to early literacy.

"The **One Book, Every Young Child** program is another example of Governor Rendell's tremendous commitment to early education of Pennsylvania's youngest children," said Secretary of Education Gerald L. Zahorchak. "Thanks to Governor Rendell's vision and the legislature's leadership, the Commonwealth has made historic investments in early childhood education, and those investments are making a real difference in raising student achievement."

This year's book, *A Splendid Friend, Indeed*, lends itself to discussions of emotions, facial expressions and nonverbal communication; modeling, imitation and follow-the-leader; opposites and similarities; and the art in the book that of textiles and textures, colors and shades.

Information and program ideas have been developed by librarians and museum educators from across Pennsylvania to promote the value and benefits of reading early and often to preschoolers and to encourage family bonding through books and reading.

"For a child, a book can spark a love of reading that will last a lifetime," said Public Welfare Secretary Estelle B. Richman. "Through this initiative, we're providing children and their families with the opportunity to learn and grow together as they develop the skills they need to succeed in school and in life."

Throughout the year, there will be local events supporting the **One Book, Every Young Child** reading initiative, including author visits across the state to libraries, children's museums, preschools, Head Start centers and family literacy programs.

There will be library and museum programming for families and activities for parents, early care providers and educators – all to promote the value and benefits of reading early and often to preschoolers and to encourage family bonding through books and reading. Many of these ideas can be found on the program's Web site at www.paonebook.org.

There also will be 75 traveling trunks developed by museum educators to help expand upon the concepts of *A Splendid Friend, Indeed*. Each trunk is filled with fun book-

related puppets, games and manipulatives for young children, as well as a guide for librarians and educators that encourages use of the trunk contents in activities that are aligned with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards.

Additionally, more than 50 VIP readers from the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare will be traveling the state to read to children in various settings.

The Pennsylvania Library Association through its member libraries will support the **One Book, Every Young Child** reading initiative throughout the year. Bloom will speak at its Early Learning Forum at the Hilton Harrisburg on March 21, 2007, and assist in recognizing best practice winning libraries across the state.

One Book, Every Young Child is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, Please Touch Museum, State Museum of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Library Association, Pennsylvania Public Television Network, Pennsylvania Center for the Book, Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children, The Pennsylvania Child Care Association, PennSERVE, Boyds Mills Press (publishers of Bloom's books) and Verizon.

This program also was supported in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the state of Pennsylvania.

Information about **One Book, Every Young Child** may be obtained by visiting www.paonebook.org, which also includes a schedule of the author's visits around the state.

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