For immediate release:

Contact: Ellen Flanagan Kenny
ellenfkenny@massbook.org
413-341-3143

24th Annual Massachusetts Letters About Literature Awards Announced

Northampton, MA, May 29, 2024—Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB) was pleased to celebrate another successful year in its flagship program for young people, Letters About Literature (LAL), at a May 21 State House awards ceremony. LAL is a reading and writing initiative that invites students from Grades 4 to 12 to write letters to authors about the books that have resonated with them.

In welcoming the audience of thirty students and their families, legislators, teachers, and librarians, MCB Executive Director Courtney Andree noted it was the first LAL ceremony at the State House since 2019 and applauded the student honorees for their rich, insightful and meaningful letters.

Representative Lindsay Sabadosa (First Hampshire) provided the legislative welcome in the Great Hall, noting that abolitionist and author Frederick Douglass wrote, “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” She congratulated the students “for having the courage to tell your stories, and for being active and engaged readers – and citizens.”

To mark the return to an in-person ceremony, New York Times-bestselling middle grade author Lynda Mullaly Hunt of Massachusetts appeared as a surprise guest at the ceremony. She addressed the audience with personal anecdotes of her childhood, the role of books in her development, and her path to teaching and writing books for young people, and she told the students they had earned her respect as fellow writers.

For a complete list of the 2024 LAL Honorees, see https://www.massbook.org/current-awards.

MCB Program Manager Karolina Zapal noted the insights and life experiences that thousands of students from across the Commonwealth conveyed in their letters to authors. “They often reveal a depth of understanding and emotional connection that goes beyond mere academic exercise.” Zapal also expressed gratitude to the insight and dedication of the judges and screeners.

The awards were presented by the 2024 Commonwealth judges: Massachusetts children’s book author Josh Funk; Tween Services Librarian Alicia Rogers of Worcester Public Library; and Betsy Groban of Cambridge, journalist, former publishing executive, and author. They were supported by a team of screeners from the Simmons University School of Library and Information Sciences, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Smith College.

About the Massachusetts Center for the Book

Founded in 2000, the Massachusetts Center for the Book is the Commonwealth affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. MCB is charged with developing, supporting, and promoting cultural programming to advance the cause of books, reading, and libraries across Massachusetts. The Center runs youth and family literacy programs; operates the Massachusetts Book Awards and the writing initiative, Letters About Literature; represents the Commonwealth at the National Book Festival; and partners with community organizations on literary initiatives and events, big and small, across the Commonwealth. We
engage readers at all stages of life with relevant, diverse, and vibrant programming, reaching thousands of Massachusetts residents each year.