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THE BOOK LOVE FOUNDATION AWARDED ITS 55TH CLASSROOM LIBRARY THIS YEAR

North Conway, NH (June 5, 2017) -- Since 2013 the Book Love Foundation has given \$223,000 in grants to classroom teachers. This year, twenty middle and high school English Language Arts teachers from the United States and Canada were awarded 500-book classroom libraries due to their extraordinary dedication to create a lasting love of reading for all students. These teachers work at local, state, and national levels to inspire their colleagues.

Stephen Briseño teaches 8th grade English at Alamo Heights Junior High School in San Antonio, TX. His school is urban/suburban and he has been teaching for 10 years. His passion for reading and learning extends well beyond the classroom. He can be heard in the lounge, parking lot, playground, hallways, and on social media exchanging with others about what they're reading or learning. He is deeply concerned about hard-to-reach students and spends considerable energy trying to find just the right book to ignite a lasting interest in reading.

Dayna Browning teaches 8th grade English at Auburn Junior High in Auburn, Alabama. Dayna describes herself as a, "Reader & lover of books; student analyzer; listener & sounding board; joke-teller & group facilitator; creator, inventor, laughter, crier." Her book knowledge of young adult literature is current and extensive, reflecting both her wide reading and her assessment of students' interests and needs. She provides weekly feedback on students' reading reflection entries and uses these entries and conferences to set reading goals with her students. Dayna's stories of students convinced us of her deep commitment to the success of every student.

Gretchen Egner teaches 9th graders in Waukesha, Wisconsin. She has been teaching for 21 years, yet still actively pursues professional learning, asking how she can serve students better. She recognizes that there are underutilized classroom libraries in her district, and will pay forward her Book Love grant by sharing the "strategies she's used to get books off the shelves and into kids' hands" through professional development meetings and social media channels." Gretchen says, "The true assessment of independent reading is the increased complexity of their chosen books, pages read, and/or time devoted to independent reading." We know an additional 500 books will be in good hands with Gretchen.

Nichole Folkman teaches grades 6-7 and 9-12 at Hartsburg-Emden Jr./Sr. High School in Hartsburg, Illinois. Nichole was a finalist in both the 2017 Illinois Teacher of the Year and the

Penguin Teacher Awards for Literacy. Nichole is relentless in seeking donors and scouring thrift stores for books for her library. She has read extensively about how to connect kids to reading, and is deeply committed to a choice reading program. A Book Love Foundation board member commented, "A library in Nichole's hands serves her students, serves the school, and ultimately serves the purpose of the Book Love Foundation."

Kendra Helfrich teaches 8th grade English at Yorkdale Central High School in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Kendra leads workshops for her colleagues and is legendary for her commitment to every student she teaches. The closest bookstore to her school is two hours away, so she puts together a carefully-selected stack of books for each student for the first day of the school year, based upon interest surveys she gives out before they leave for summer. Kendra's students have already created pay-it-forward plans for this grant in order to help other students learn to love reading.

Michelle Hopf & Kristina Passi teach 7th grade at J. F. Drake Middle School in Auburn, Alabama. Students in this school represent 30 different countries. Michelle and Kristina began a Family Book Club to bring teachers, administrators, and parents together around books (with or without the students). Michelle and Kristina place a heavy emphasis on having students select from different genres to become more well-rounded and aware individuals. In their application they said, "We have found a student every year who did not know you could read a book about a non-white person in school, something our system is working hard to change. We choose books which illustrate what literature can be: windows into new worlds and stories of hope and survival."

Christi Jones teaches 8th grade at Dover Middle School in Dover, Arkansas, a high poverty area where resources often present an obstacle to learning for her students. Although she has worked hard to build a classroom library, she wrote that the Book Love Foundation grant will serve as a morale boost to her students. She said, "It will serve as an example that resources are available for students in poverty (and for the teachers that serve them) so that we can work to level the playing field in education. Books are the true foundation of education. Please help us get our hands on these precious commodities." We are thrilled to do just that.

Alex Karamol teaches 5th graders at KIPP Camino Academy in San Antonio, Texas. Alex is a leader in her school because she believes that "time to read in school, choice in reading material, and accessibility to quality high-interest books is a right for all students." She works hard to connect students to books and encourage their growth as readers. She said, "The biggest challenge my students and I face is how far below grade level they are reading when they enter middle school. My classroom library has been transformational in both my classroom culture as well as academic results, as my students grew an average of 2.07 years in reading between August and December this year. This would not have been possible if not for the strong culture of independent reading in my classroom. I am dedicated to continuing to build my classroom library and to creating lifelong readers."

Brianna Keane teaches grades 9-10 at Wilmington High School in Homer Glen, Illinois. She defined herself as a "Student-branded 'hippie teacher' who shows sophomores at WHS what it means to fall in love with reading and writing all over again." Her professionalism is evident in the conferences, presentations, blogs, and Twitter chats she participates in regularly; she is determined to start a revolution for reading. Brianna is outspoken and influential among her colleagues, but most importantly, with her students. In her application she said, "I put the right book in one of the toughest kid's hands, he absolutely devoured it, and moved on to poetry. By the end of the semester, I had him performing original spoken word poems in front of all of his peers."

Amanda Kerrigan teaches 11th graders at Manitou Springs High School in Fountain, Colorado. She has been running an independent reading component in her classroom for the past six years and continues to push her understanding of good pedagogy—and “put my personal convictions about social justice and inclusivity into practice in my classroom.” Her school library has been stripped of most books and there’s no librarian. We honor Amanda’s commitment to her professional growth, as evident by her membership in several professional organizations, including the National Council of Teachers of English, the Colorado Council of the International Reading Association, and the Colorado Language Arts Society. She will pay her gift forward by using data about her students’ growth to build administrative support for more classroom and school libraries in her district.

Stephanie Klanssek teaches 7th & 10th grade at Markle Intermediate School in Hanover, Pennsylvania. She has established a program supporting the independence of her readers. Students are issued a series of challenges: five books, then ten, and finally a Million Word Club Challenge. She spends a significant amount of time conferring with students which assists her in evaluating their comprehension. She stated, “If my classroom was selected to receive a grant, I would also use the personal money that I usually spend on books to purchase one or two titles for each of my students before they leave for summer vacation, in hopes of lessening the summer slide that often occurs.”

Caitlyn Lasater teaches grades 8-9 at La Porte High School in La Porte, Texas. She described her childhood: “My mother could not afford to keep the heat on in our little cottage in Maine, but she always made sure to read the story of Pip in *Great Expectations*. I envisioned myself as Pip, growing up poor but loved.” She describes her current classroom library as, “out of date, mostly snagged from garage sales, left over teacher rooms, and library giveaways.” She is, however, determined to find books to engage every student in reading. “These students, the ones I see hungry, joining gangs, doing drugs, need a place to go to feel safe. They need a comfort. I believe they can find that in the pages of a book.” Her students will soon have hundreds to choose from.

Nicole Mashock teaches grades 6-9 at the Fond du Lac STEM Academy in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. It takes tremendous commitment to meet the needs of a wide range of reading abilities when there is no librarian in her school. Nichole began collecting books for a classroom library in her first year of teaching. She confers daily with students and says, “I need to expand my library so that students have access to complex texts that challenge their abilities and thinking.” Nichole reads professional journals, attends state conferences as well as the national ALAN conference, and we believe her work will have an impact on our profession.

Lori Mortland teaches grades 9 and 11 at Calhoun High School in Hardin, Illinois. She teaches English to all of the juniors and freshmen at her rural school. She said, “My bookshelves are always a hot mess. Empty spots, titles in the wrong genres, and new books that look like they’ve been to war and back. My library is home to a fierce reading culture that breeds lifelong readers! Being selected as a Book Love grant recipient would allow my students access to more titles and help me foster this newfound reading culture for years to come.” A powerful student recommendation was influential in the board’s decision to award Lori a library. Clearly she is inspiring her students to love reading.

Sarah Novak teaches 6th & 8th grade at Heritage Middle School in Westerville, Ohio. She supports the Spirit Book Club in her school, which focuses on books written by authors of color. Membership in the past several years has increased significantly. Her students are sometimes intimidated by books because their peers read at higher levels. Sarah says, “I buy books with certain students in mind and will personally give them a book talk about the book

and why I bought it with them in mind. I find this goes far in motivating a student.” Sarah works with other teachers to promote more reading in all classrooms in her school.

Rachael Pisarik is an 8th grade teacher at Southeast Junior High in Iowa City, Iowa. Her commitment to turning kids into lifelong readers is evident in her Goodreads account, her teaching blog, her Twitter feed, and her recent promotion to instructional leader, an addition to her classroom teaching responsibilities. Rachael hosts university students each semester and says, “I am committed to opening up the world of reading to all of my learners—honor students, nonreaders, documented and undocumented immigrants, refugees, and especially my favorite students who, in the beginning of the year, announce they loathe reading. I believe what connects us all are the stories that we share. Anyone, at any age, can begin their journey as a reader. It is my job as a teacher to lead my students to the stories with which they will fall head over heels in love.”

Renaë Tice teaches students at Rice Challenge Academy in Alletown, Texas, a residential program for teens run by the National Guard. Her classroom library is the only source for books, which provides her students with a lifeline away from their past troubles. She looks for books that can be a source of hope for her students. As she tells them, “Your past does not have to define your future.” She stated that students often smuggle books to read after curfew at night. Renaë extends her reach beyond her school community: she gathered 200 books to send to her son’s platoon in Iraq, and she works with local pregnant students who are not able to attend school.

Josie Torres teaches 8th grade at John A. Sutter Middle School in Winnetka, California. She describes her work as an, “8th grade English teacher to amazing angst-prone, life changing, secret book loving teenagers ready to read the world.” Josie has acquired two master’s degrees (Secondary Education and Education Leadership) and obtained National Board certification. She believes that her students’ lack of access to books at school and home is the most significant reason so many of them do not enjoy or appreciate reading. She said, “The work I do is a constant paying it forward. I am indebted to public education and working class families. My students are a constant inspiration.”

Sarah Valingo teaches grades 7-12 at Crestview High School in Columbiana, Ohio where there is not even a single bookstore in town. She says, “I will battle for students’ right to read. My students read every week. They love reading days in my classroom, and I work tirelessly to defend and nourish that love. My students need books. Many of my students do not have books in their homes. My students are just north of an impoverished Appalachia. These are the forgotten ones, the under-advertised and under-educated poor. Please help me expand the world they think they know. Help me encourage them to be literate and critically thinking citizens through reading. I may be the last bastion before they set off into lives untouched by the wonder and magic of books.” Sarah attends local, state, and national conferences to support her own professional development, and we are thrilled to support her work.

Jessika Whiteside teaches grades 8-11 at Romulus High School in Romulus, Michigan. Jessica described her passion in her application, “I live for the moments students flag me down to tell me about what they’re reading because they can’t get enough of a book or when they rush through a book they adore. More than anything else, I fundamentally believe reading can absolutely change lives—especially students like mine, who have turbulent histories with reading. I love buying books for my students so I can spread this love, but the reality is that I am limited by a teacher’s budget. I hope to get this grant to help expand my library for my students, but even more so I hope to get this grant because I know that they need to feel like other people are invested in them, too. Most of my students, regardless of grade or level I see them in, do not live in homes with books. They do not recall being read to as children.

They do not have a favorite book (yet). They do not feel like people have cared about their reading in the past. Getting this grant will say that others value their reading and futures, too, and they deserve that just as much as they deserve to connect with books they will love.”

The mission of the Book Love Foundation is to help teachers engage all students in reading. Each of these teachers will receive a grant to purchase 500 books for their classrooms. Penny Kittle, President of the Book Love Foundation explains, “We work with Booksource of St. Louis, Missouri to select books in a wide range of genres that are of high interest to student readers,” said Kittle. “The books are then chosen by each grant winner for his/her students from our curated list of hundreds of titles.”

“Each of our grant winners has demonstrated a commitment to developing a rich reading life in even the most reluctant readers. Most of our grant winners teach in high poverty areas, and all of our grant winners have spent their own money to purchase books to build their libraries,” reported Kittle. “We want to support their hard work and their dedication to their students.” Penny Kittle teaches English at Kennett High School in North Conway, NH each fall semester and at the University of New Hampshire in the summer. She is also a regular speaker and conference presenter at schools throughout the world.

“Research has repeatedly shown that students who are given choice in reading and time to read increase their interest in books, improve their vocabulary and are better prepared for the challenges of post-secondary education,” notes Kittle. “The Book Love Foundation is grateful for the on-going support of Booksource and Heinemann Publishing, two of our primary benefactors, who have each donated a full library each year. The sales representatives for Heinemann have been a constant, generous support of our work, and Booksource provides all shipping costs along with deeply discounted prices for books, allowing us to stretch our donations as far as possible,” stated Kittle.

The Book Love Foundation received 140 grant applications in 2017 from across the United States and Canada. For more information on this year's winners, or to help the foundation meet our ambitious goals for all readers (and their teachers), please visit <https://www.booklovefoundation.org/>. 100% of donations fund classroom libraries.