



Press Release

Raising readers one book bag at a time.

For Immediate Release

October 20, 2011

Raising A Reader MA's Donna DiFillippo Named 2011 Literacy Champion

\$3,500 prize money raised through Verizon's 'Check Into Literacy' Program

Boston -- The Massachusetts Literacy Foundation, in partnership with Verizon's Check Into Literacy Program, announced on September 22, 2011 that Raising A Reader MA's Executive Director, Donna DiFillippo, was one of ten recipients of the 2011 Massachusetts Literacy Champion Award. The Massachusetts Literacy Champion Award, created in 2003, identifies and supports Massachusetts literacy providers who have shown exceptional commitment and results through their work in literacy education. Each year ten literacy champions from across Massachusetts are selected and recognized for their achievements in the field. The Award comes with a \$3,500 cash prize which must be used to support both creative program development and professional growth.

Reflecting on her receipt of a 2011 Massachusetts Champions for Literacy Award Donna says, "I feel honored to be part of a select group of colleagues standing together to promote literacy for children, adults and families." Steve Smith, Founder and President of Jog Nog, and Past Chair of the Raising A Reader MA Board cites Donna's passion as among the reasons he has become a champion for children's literacy, "I might seem to be an unlikely fit to chair the board of a non-profit that helps low income children develop a love of reading with their families. My background is in building high tech start-up companies and my education, at MIT and Harvard, was in science, and technology. I decided to bring my full personal attention to this challenge because of Donna's commitment, leadership and tenacity. She helped me to understand that early literacy is critical to the foundation of so many other challenges facing our children and our country."

Unlike many singular awards programs, the Literacy Champions Awards recognize multiple individuals, practices and programs. Each year, up to ten Literacy Champions are chosen from a competitive nomination pool to represent the diverse fields of literacy education in Massachusetts. They are classroom teachers, administrators and volunteers who work in urban and rural areas throughout Massachusetts. Literacy Champions collaborate throughout the year, serve as ambassadors for The Massachusetts Literacy Foundation and share their work in literacy with peers across the commonwealth.

"The new Literacy Champions join a network of more than 50 literacy professionals who are among the best practitioners in their field," said Carol Anne Conroy, president of the Massachusetts Literacy Foundation. "This program enables us not only to recognize the important work of these wonderful people who are dedicated to helping others, but gives us a vehicle to work together to share best practices."

Other 2011 Literacy Champions are:

Iris Broudy

ABE/ESOL Instructor

Hampden House of Correction, Ludlow

Rafi Chaprut

ESOL Volunteer Teacher

Access, Hyannis

Lillie Marshall
Language Arts Teacher
Boston Latin Academy, Boston

Nusean Mayfield
Parent Facilitator
Elias Brooking Museum Magnet School, Springfield

David Mazor
Program Founder and Director
Reader to Reader, Amherst

Meghan McGinley Crowe
Executive Director of Education
Little Sprouts, Lawrence

Karen Miller
GED, Career Instructor
The Literacy Center, Bristol Community College,
Attleboro

Diane Palmaccio
Reading Specialist
Silver Hill Horace Mann Charter School, Haverhill

Karen Voght
Creator/Director, Alphabet Fitness Project Wellness,
Inc., Boston

Through its Check Into Literacy program, Verizon gives wireline phone customers the opportunity to donate \$1 a month to literacy programs when they pay their Verizon bill. In Massachusetts, proceeds raised through the program are donated to the Massachusetts Literacy Foundation to promote the Literacy Champions' efforts in local communities. Literacy Champions each receive \$3,500 in grants to support their work. This year, more than \$74,000 was donated to the Massachusetts Literacy Foundation.

“We are proud to partner with the Massachusetts Literacy Foundation to recognize the efforts of literacy professionals across the state,” said Donna Cupelo, region president of Verizon New England. “People in this field work tirelessly to ensure people have the literacy skills they need to meet their education, career and life goals. Thanks to their efforts, we are building stronger communities here in Massachusetts.”

The Massachusetts Literacy Foundation, founded by Herald Media, supports the development of a fully literate population and is committed to taking innovative action to help the commonwealth achieve that goal. Herald Media brings to the Foundation the power of the press – communication & delivery – the unique ability to connect schools, family and the workforce by using the newspaper as the common denominator.

The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon, uses its technology, financial resources and partnerships to address critical social issues, with a focus on education and domestic violence prevention. In 2010, the foundation awarded nearly \$67 million to nonprofit agencies in the U.S. and abroad. Through Verizon Volunteers, one of the nation's largest employee volunteer programs, Verizon employees and retirees have volunteered nearly 6 million hours of community service since 2000. For more information on the foundation, visit www.verizonfoundation.org.

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