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***Up, Down, and Around* honored as 2008 selection for PA's One Book, Every Young Child early literacy program**

HARRISBURG, PA – *Up, Down, and Around*, written by Pennsylvania author Katherine Ayres and illustrated by Nadine Bernard Westcott, has been named the 2008 selection of the third annual Pennsylvania **One Book, Every Young Child** early literacy program.

The book is billed as a “rollicking celebration of things that grow,” featuring children learning about a garden teeming with life, producing a variety of edible plants, such as corn that grows up, onions that grow down, and tomato vines that twine all around.

The program will kick off with a reception at the Pennsylvania State Capitol, April 1, 4-6 p.m. Members of the Pennsylvania Library Association, legislators and other community leaders will join the author to promote the development of early literacy skills through interactive experiences with books and stories.

The Capitol launch event is a prelude to Ayres' 20 days of visits across the state that start April 3, 11 a.m., at the New Cumberland Public Library (Foundation Hall), 1 Benjamin Plaza, New Cumberland. A full listing of her visits will continually be updated on the Web site www.paonebook.org.

More than a half million Pennsylvania children ages 3-6 are reached annually through the **One Book, Every Young Child** program which stresses the importance of reading early and often to young children and how that impacts their future lives.

In its commitment to unlock the promise of literacy, a \$40,000 grant from Verizon Foundation will provide a copy of *Up, Down, and Around* to more than 15,000 Pennsylvania childcare facilities, licensed preschools, Head Start programs and family literacy programs.

“Verizon is proud to partner with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Office of Commonwealth Libraries in this program that empowers young children and their families with the skills and passion to pursue a life of learning,” 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.”

The beauty of the One Book, Every Young Child program goes far beyond asking parents and caregivers 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.

“I’m humbled and honored to have my book selected,” said Ayres. “In some ways I’m really a poster child for early literacy. I was read to constantly as a child, and it was natural for me to start writing stories of my own. I’m delighted and excited about the chance to travel the state and have an effect on children’s connections with books and literacy.”

Up, Down, and Around is an excellent choice for the program, with language that is extremely simple and rhythmical. “It’s a very easy book on the ear. Children have a better recall of books when there is that rhythmical language and patterning,” said Ayres.

On the first level, *Up, Down, and Around* is about vegetables. But it’s also about plants in general and growing things. “The insects add an entirely different dimension,” said Ayres. “There is so much going on because of the wonderful illustrations. I couldn’t have been happier with the choice of the illustrator. Her illustrations make the book sing.”

The book is also about directionality, and those reading the book to children can engage them in conversation about directions and locations, helping to stretch their vocabulary with words such as in front of, behind, underneath and more.

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.”

“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.”

Across the nation, just under half of children between birth and five years (47.8%) are read to every day by their parents or other family members, according to the study, “Reading Across the Nation: A Chartbook” released Nov. 1, 2007, for Reach Out and Read by UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities. This is the first report to track state by state daily rates of reading to young children.

The study provides both national and state by state information about whether parents are meeting the recommendation of reading aloud to their children ages 0-5. The percentage of families reading to their children every day varies by state and by race/ethnicity and family income within states.

In Pennsylvania, 56.7% of children ages 0-5 are read to every day, above the national average; however only 36% of students are at or above “proficient” in reading by grade 4.

The **One Book, Every Young Child** reading initiative hopes to help change these statistics. The program includes 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 65 traveling trunks developed by museum educators to help expand upon the concepts of *Up, Down, and Around*. 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, about 100 legislators and 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. Ayres will speak at its Early Learning Forum at the Hilton Harrisburg on April 2, 2008, and assist in recognizing best practice winning libraries across the state.

One Book, Every Young Child is made possible through a collaboration of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 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, HSLC/Access PA and Verizon. This program 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 Pennsylvania’s Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

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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