

PRESS RELEASE

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First Book and Celebrated Children’s Author Pat Mora Honor Texas School with Estela and Raúl Mora Award

Three schools serving students in need receive special recognition for promoting literacy

WASHINGTON, September 29, 2016 – Sonia M. Sotomayor Early College High School in Pharr, Texas, will receive the 2016 Estela and Raúl Mora Award, an honor given by award-winning children’s author Pat Mora and her sister in partnership with First Book, the nonprofit social enterprise that has distributed more than 150 million books to children in need. This year, the award recognized schools that held literacy activities during the month of April in celebration of Children’s Day, Book Day; also known as El día de los niños, El día de los libros; or Día. Founded by Mora in 1996, Día is a nationally recognized initiative that emphasizes the importance of literacy for all children, from all backgrounds, and creatively links them to the gift of reading all year round to spark a lifelong love of reading, or, as Mora calls it, “bookjoy.”

Sonia M. Sotomayor Early College High School, a special purpose program committed to teen mothers’ success, earned this year’s top honor for hosting a full week of family-oriented bilingual and multicultural activities. The week focused on preparing teen mothers for success in motherhood, literacy for children, culturally diverse learning resources, and the role of mothers in children’s early cognitive and literacy development. Activities provided students with research-based methods of introducing their children to reading and each student received a free children’s book.

The award will provide \$1,000 in credits to the First Book Marketplace, the nonprofit’s award-winning e-commerce site that offers books and educational materials—for free or at deeply reduced rates—to schools and programs serving children in need.

“Literacy is inherently linked to a love of reading,” said Kyle Zimmer, president and CEO of First Book. “We know that children who excel at reading, no matter where they are from, aren’t motivated by a desire to achieve literacy, but by the sheer joy they find on the pages of a book. That’s why we love Pat Mora’s books so much, and why we are so pleased to partner with her to distribute this award. All children deserve access to brand new books and the opportunity to fall in love with reading.”

Broward County Public Schools in Hollywood, Fla., and Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) Library and Media Services in Brownsville, Texas were also recognized for innovative Día celebrations, which reached a combined 187 elementary schools and 200 early education providers. Each district will receive \$500 in credit to the First Book Marketplace.

Nearly 75 schools and educational programs submitted entries to this year’s award process.

“We celebrate Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. We need kids’ day too,” Mora said. “By celebrating all our children and connecting them with bookjoy, the pleasure of reading, we enrich their lives and strengthen our communities.”

Book ownership and a print-rich environment are leading indicators of a child's educational success, but for the 32 million children growing up in low-income families in the U.S. alone, books are scarce. Studies have found that in low-income neighborhoods there is only one book for every 300 children; whereas in more moderate income neighborhoods, there are 13 books for every one child.

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About First Book

First Book is a nonprofit social enterprise that has distributed more than 150 million books and educational resources to schools and programs serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada. With more than 275,000 members, First Book is the largest and fastest growing network of educators exclusively serving kids in need. By making new, high-quality books and educational resources available on an ongoing basis, First Book is transforming the lives of children in need and elevating the quality of education. Eligible educators, librarians, program leaders, and others serving children in need can sign up at firstbook.org/register. For more information, please visit firstbook.org or follow the latest news on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Pat Mora

Pat Mora is an award-winning author of [Book Fiesta](#), [I Pledge Allegiance](#), and [Water Rolls, Water Rises](#), among others. A literacy advocate excited about sharing what she calls "*bookjoy*," Pat founded Children's Day, Book Day, El día de los niños, El día de los libros often known as [Día](#). A former teacher, university administrator, museum director, and consultant, Pat is a popular national speaker at conferences, campuses, libraries and schools. She has three adult children and a sweet Austin granddaughter. Pat is married to anthropology professor Vern Scarborough and lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.