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RECORD NUMBERS OF YOUNG-ADULT BOOKS WILL BE DONATED TO TEEN PATIENTS THURSDAY AS PART OF READERGIRLZ AND YALSA LITERACY PROGRAM

“Operation TBD” puts 10,000 books into North America’s top pediatric hospitals in celebration of Support Teen Literature Day on April 17

April 14, 2008 (Seattle, Wash.) – Teen patients in pediatric hospitals across the United States and Canada will receive 10,000 young adult novels, audiobooks, and graphic novels Thursday as readergirlz and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) celebrate the second annual Support Teen Lit Day on April 17.

This unprecedented teen literacy program, coined “Operation TBD” (short for Teen Book Drop), will put free books—altogether valued at more than \$175,000—donated by 20 book publishers into the hands of many of the teens most in need of solace, entertainment and a sense of personal accomplishment. After all, long-term hospital stays can be difficult on many levels—for teenagers and their families.

Justina Chen Headley, co-founder of readergirlz and award-winning novelist, wanted to find a way to support teen patients going through such difficulties through a massive book drop. “While touring my local children’s hospital to research my novel, *Girl Overboard*, I couldn’t help noticing that teen patients didn’t seem to have the comfort objects that the little ones did,” she said. “As an author, I knew that YA books—books with exceptional characters and fabulous stories—could provide teen patients with some of the escape and inspiration they needed. And I knew that readergirlz and YALSA were just the groups to spearhead a teen literacy program of this magnitude.”

Operation TBD also aims to encourage teens to choose reading for pleasure as a leisure activity, as young adults now have many options for entertainment and often choose reading less often. This meshes well with YALSA’s Support Teen Literature Day, which kicks off Teen Read Week, a weeklong event held the third week of October that encourages teens to read, just for the fun of it. Teen Read Week 2008 is Oct. 12-18, with the theme of Books with Bite @ your library®.

To help incite the broader teen community to participate in Operation TBD in its drive to spur reading on a national scale, readergirlz has invited all teens and YA authors to leave a book in a public place on April 17. When visiting www.readergirlz.com, participants can download bookplates to insert into the books they’ll leave behind, which explain the surprise to the recipient and tell them to read and enjoy.

“By working with children’s hospitals to connect with teens, generous publishers who are donating the books that will be supplied as a part of Operation TBD and the readergirlz, YALSA is bringing together a powerful partnership uniquely positioned to provide hospitalized teens a chance to explore the growing and vibrant world of teen literature,” said YALSA President Paula Brehm-Heeger. “Teens will be encouraged to pass along the books received through Operation TBD to another teen after they’re finished reading them, allowing this new initiative to ensure that Support Teen Literature Day has lasting impact.”

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Participating book publishers who have donated books or audiobooks include Abrams Books, Bloomsbury USA, Candlewick Press, Da Capo Press, Full Cast Audio, Harcourt, HarperCollins, Hyperion Books, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, Marshall Cavendish, Mirrorstone (imprint of Wizards of the Coast), Newmarket Press, Orca Book Publishers, Peachtree Publishers, Perseus Book Group, Random House, Scholastic, Simon & Schuster Children's Books, TOKYOPOP, and Tor Books.

"Books have always been a form of escape and entertainment and Mirrorstone is thrilled to have the chance to participate in this very worthy cause," said Shelly Mazzanoble, associate brand manager for Mirrorstone Books. "Our hope is that the donated books really connect with the teen patients who need them, as well as inspire all teens to turn to reading for pleasure."

Pediatric hospitals that have signed up to receive books include All Children's Hospital Foundation (St. Petersburg, Fla.), Children's Hospital Boston, Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation, Children's Medical Center (Dallas, TX), Children's Memorial Hospital (Chicago, Ill.), Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics (Kansas City, MO), Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health—Library Library/Family Resource Center (Palo Alto, CA), Seattle Children's Hospital—Children's Hospital Foundation, SickKids Foundation (Toronto, Ontario), St. Louis Children's Hospital Foundation, Texas Children's Hospital (Houston, TX).

"Participating children's hospitals are most grateful for the generous donations of books," said Marion Woyvodich, executive director of The Woodmark Group, an organization that represents 24 prominent children's hospitals of North America.

Everyone who participates in Operation TBD is invited to celebrate at the TBD Post-Op Party on April 17th on the readergirlz MySpace group forum: <http://groups.myspace.com/readergirlz>.

About Support Teen Literature Day

For the second consecutive year, Support Teen Literature Day will be celebrated April 17, 2008 in conjunction with ALA's National Library Week. Librarians all across the country are encouraged to participate in Support Teen Literature Day by hosting events in their library. The purpose of this new celebration is to raise awareness among the general public that young adult literature is a vibrant, growing genre with much to offer today's teens. Support Teen Literature Day also seeks to showcase some award-winning authors and books in the genre as well as highlight librarians' expertise in connecting teens with books and other reading materials.

About the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)

For 50 years, YALSA has been the world leader in selecting books, videos, and audiobooks for teens. For more information about YALSA or for lists of recommended reading, viewing and listening, go to www.ala.org/yalsa or contact the YALSA office by phone, 800-545-2433, ext. 4390.

About readergirlz

readergirlz is the foremost online book community for teen girls, led by four critically-acclaimed YA authors—Dia Calhoun (*Avielle of Rhia*), Lorie Ann Grover (*On Pointe*), Justina Chen Headley (*Girl Overboard*), and Mitali Perkins (*First Daughter: White House Rules*). readergirlz was co-founded by Dia Calhoun, Janet Lee Carey, Lorie Ann Grover, and Justina Chen Headley—all four of whom have been touched by children's hospitals or hospitals in some way or other.

To promote teen literacy and leadership in girls, readergirlz features a different YA novel and corresponding community service project every month. For more information about readergirlz, please visit www.readergirlz.com and www.myspace.com/readergirlz, or contact divas@readergirlz.com