



Reading For Pleasure Dept.

The Pleasure and Promise of Reading

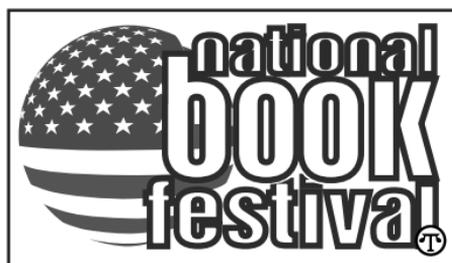
by *Laura Bush, First Lady
of the United States and
James H. Billington,
Librarian of Congress*

(NAPSA)—We invite you to join us for the second National Book Festival on Saturday, October 12 on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

This year, more than 70 award-winning authors, illustrators, and storytellers will participate in this daylong celebration of reading and storytelling. Thanks to our generous private sponsors, events will include author readings and book discussions; performances by storytellers; book sales and signings; appearances by children's storybook characters; a conservation clinic for books, family letters and albums; and performances representing a wide range of America's musical traditions. State reading programs and local libraries will be highlighted in a "Pavilion of the States," and a "Let's Read America" pavilion will provide practical information about reading and literacy promotion activities throughout the United States.

For those who cannot come to Washington, C-SPAN2's *Book TV* will again provide live television coverage of the festival. In the weeks before, events in 22 different states will highlight the celebration, with special programs planned in local bookstores, libraries, state festivals, and state Centers for the Book. These programs include poetry readings in Maine, a statewide reading of *The Grapes of Wrath* in California, and local book festivals in Florida, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska and Texas.

We hope all Americans will participate in the National Book Festival, either by attending an event or simply by pulling a book off a shelf and reading it to a child. Research shows that one of the most important things for a



child's later academic success is being read to from infancy on. Reading scores in the 10th grade can be predicted with surprising accuracy from a child's knowledge of the alphabet in kindergarten. Yet today, America is suffering from a reading crisis, with less than one-third of fourth graders in our poorest schools able to read at a proficient level.

America was changed forever three days after the first National Book Festival was held on September 8, 2001. One thing that has not changed, however, is our love of spending time with friends, family and good books. A library in a home or public place can take us to a place of quiet wonder, reflection and imagination. Even in the digital age, books are and will remain our principal guardians of memory, the primary record of the struggles as well as the achievements of those who have gone before. Though a book itself may give no final answers, it often gives rise to better questions.

While we will have much to celebrate at the National Book Festival on October 12, we also have an opportunity to remind all Americans that there is much we can do to improve our children's reading abilities. A child who can read is a child who can dream about the future...and make that dream come true.

For more information about the National Book Festival and events, call toll-free (888) 714-4696 or visit the Library of Congress Web site at www.loc.gov