

For information, contact: Holly Lange
601.906.8698

RECORD ATTENDANCE AT SATURDAY'S BOOK FESTIVAL

Jackson, MS – More than 9,300 people attended the Mississippi Book Festival's fifth anniversary celebration at the State Capitol complex on Saturday. This represents record attendance for the five-year-old festival and is an increase of 22 percent from last year.

According to Holly Lange, Festival Executive Director, "More than 245 authors participated in Saturday's festival, including 170 on 48 official panels and another 75 authors meeting the public in Author's Alley. Many of the panels were standing room only and our ten booksellers sold thousands of books." Some of the authors attending the festival were Richard Ford, Joyce Carol Oates, Sonia Sotomayor, Natasha Trethewey, Dav Pilkey, Ann Patchett, Suzanne Stabile, Angie Thomas, Harrison Scott Key, Karl Marlantes, Kevin Powers, Kiese Laymon, Margaret McMullan, Karen Abbott, Casey Cep, Mary Miller, Candace Bushnell, and Michael Dobbs.

On Friday, two of the Book Festival's visiting authors – Dav Pilkey and Sonia Sotomayor – spoke to more than 5,600 students from the metro Jackson area in multiple sessions at Thalia Mara Hall and the Galloway Methodist Church sanctuary. At the conclusion of each session, every student was given a free book from either Pilkey or Sotomayor. "There is nothing quite like a student having a chance to hear directly from a nationally recognized author, to learn what it's like to write a book and to create stories and characters," said Lange.

John Evans, owner of Lemuria Books in Jackson, has been a guiding hand in the planning process. Said Evans, "Mississippi's literary contributions have enhanced our state and national culture. Our great writers are household names; many of their stories are our stories. But before great writers put pen to paper, they were first great readers, which is why we offer so many activities and panels dedicated to children's authors."

Lange also pointed out that the Book Festival had early kick-offs this year in Pass Christian and Cleveland, plus more authors visiting schools on the Gulf Coast and in the Delta. "All total,"

said Lange, “the Mississippi Book Festival reached more than 15,200 people in the last 72 hours celebrating the written word.”