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Contact: Holly Lange, director

Mississippi Book Festival

(601) 906-8698

holly@msbookfestival.com

MS Book Festival triples student outreach this year

JACKSON, Miss. — The Mississippi Book Festival balloons its outreach to students for 2019 with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor and children’s book author/illustrator Dav Pilkey set to engage thousands of students in downtown Jackson the day before the Aug. 17 event.

Sotomayor, the first Hispanic and first Latina Supreme Court justice, is also a bestselling author whose memoir *My Beloved World* and its adaptations for young readers have inspired people of all ages.

Pilkey, the award-winning and bestselling creator of the wildly popular Dog Man and Captain Underpants graphic novel series, launches his “Do Good” global tour in Jackson at the Mississippi Book Festival. Each student attending Pilkey’s presentation on Friday will receive a free copy of his newest book, *Dog Man: For Whom the Ball Rolls*, courtesy of the author and the festival.

Pilkey will be introduced by First Lady of Mississippi Deborah Bryant before his three appearances.

“I’m honored to be invited to appear at this year’s Mississippi Book Festival. I’m so excited to be a part of this community-wide celebration of books promoting the joy of reading. I’m very grateful for the people in Mississippi who are doing good everyday by getting books into the hands of readers and who make a positive impact in their communities,” said Pilkey.

Almost 6,000 metro area schoolchildren, elementary to high school, will be bused to downtown Jackson for multiple sessions with Sotomayor at Galloway United Methodist Church and with Pilkey at Thalia Mara Hall (a book festival first) on the eve of the fest. The total student count more than triples the festival’s reach to schoolkids in previous years. Each student will take home a free book from the author as a keepsake.

“Young readers grow into lifelong book lovers. It’s critical that we reach these bright young minds, ignite that spark and open the world to them,” said Holly Lange, Mississippi Book Festival director.

This year’s fifth anniversary book festival stretches earlier in the week and farther across the state, too, with community receptions and school visits with authors in the Mississippi Delta and on the Gulf Coast.

Young adult and children’s authors Kathi Appelt, Sarah Frances Hardy and Shalanda Stanley will make stops at an Aug. 15 reception at the Cotton House Hotel in Cleveland and at Delta schools on Aug. 16, leading up to the festival. Young adult sensation Angie Thomas will mingle with fans and sign books at Pass Christian Books on Aug. 15, and visit coast schools on Aug. 16 before making her way to Jackson.

On Aug. 17, all will join a sparkling lineup of more than 150 national, regional and state authors — Richard Ford, Joyce Carol Oates and Ann Patchett among them — in conversations, on panels and more at the Mississippi Book Festival, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the State Capitol and surrounding venues. The free, family-friendly festival, celebrated as the South’s literary lawn party, amps up its kids’ appeal for 2019, too, with costumed character Daniel Tiger as well as Dog Man and Captain Underpants on hand, fun activities, family storytelling and a swath of children’s book authors.

Find details and a full schedule at msbookfestival.com.