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FIRST BOOK - CHARLOTTE “EVENING OF MAGIC” TO BENEFIT LOCAL CHILDREN IN NEED

Inaugural black-tie gala to help place new books into the hands of local youth

Charlotte, NC, May 9, 2007 - On Saturday, May 12 First Book - Charlotte will present “An Evening of Magic,” their inaugural Spring Gala, which will feature an elegant evening of food and dancing in uptown Charlotte at ImaginOn: the Joe and Joan Martin Center. An Advisory Board consisting entirely of volunteers, First Book - Charlotte supplies grants of new books to local nonprofit programs serving children in need in Mecklenburg and Union Counties.

“An Evening of Magic” will feature dinner, live music, a strolling magician and renowned sketch artist Krandel Lee Newton. Cheryl Richards, Associate Dean of Central Piedmont Community College and Executive Committee Member of the Charlotte Chamber, will speak to the power of literacy to transform society in a keynote address. The black-tie gala will begin at 7:00 PM with a silent auction. Items will include: a luxury vacation, an acoustic guitar signed by Vince Gill & Amy Grant, Lowe’s Motor Speedway experience packages, original artwork, gifts from upscale retailers Neiman Marcus, Bob Ellis, and Coco Fleur, unique jewelry, gift certificates to some of the best restaurants in Charlotte and more. All proceeds raised by the gala will be used to provide children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own their first new books via grants from First Book-Charlotte.

Access to books is essential to reading development. Yet over 80% of mentoring and after-school programs serving children in low-income families lack age- and language-appropriate books. By providing children from low-income families with books they can take home and keep, First Book targets the only variable that correlates significantly with reading scores: the number of books in the home.

Two outstanding local organizations will each be recognized at the gala with a grant supplying each child in their program one new book every month for a full year. Ashley Conrad will accept one on behalf of The School at Thompson, while Athletes United 4 Youth Executive Director Jeff Hood will accept on behalf of the other.

In addition, three winners from the recent “Capture the Magic” art contest at Pinewood Elementary School will be highlighted as VIP guests of gala sponsor Time Warner Cable. The winners and their families will be transported via limousine, furnished by Sweet & Sassy, to ImaginOn, where they will be recognized by Dr. Peter C. Gorman, Superintendent of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. All winning entries from the “Capture the Magic” contest will be on display at ImaginOn.

The volunteer chairperson for this year's Spring Gala Jennifer Saltzman along with First Book - Charlotte Chairperson Colleen Ludington seek to raise \$50,000 through the gala through sponsorships, individual ticket sales and the silent auction. The evening's grant recipients will join past awardees, which include: A Child's Place, YMCA's Starfish Academy, The Brookstone Schools, Thompson Child & Family Focus and the after-school reading programs at Pinewood, Montclair and Sedgefield Elementary Schools.

The event is made possible courtesy of Platinum-level sponsor Time Warner Cable, Gold-level sponsors Bearing Point and INT2 and Silver-level sponsors SunTrust Mortgage, Hearst Service Center, OpVista, Big Band and Broadband Insights.

This year's First Book-Charlotte Spring Gala includes the following committee chairs: Jennifer Saltzman, Gala Chair; Colleen Ludington, Business Sponsorships & Auction Chair; Betsy Thorpe, Invitation & Mailings Chair; Erin McClure, Recipient Group Chair; Wendi Reichard, Decorations Chair; Brian Risinger, LGA Marketing, Publicity Chair; Tracie Vaughn-Zimmer, Volunteer Chair; Kristen Rogers, Financial Accounting Chair. Other committee members include: Sue Makepeace, Tom Mathews and Emily Pearce.

To purchase tickets, please call the ImaginOn/Children's Theatre box office at 704-973-2800. To become a sponsor, please contact Jennifer Saltzman at jsaltzman@firstbookcharlotte.org. Individual tickets are priced at \$100 and sponsorships begin at \$500. Complete details, including a complete list of sponsors and silent auction items, as well as online ticket sales are available on the First Book - Charlotte Web site: www.FirstBookCharlotte.org.

About First Book

First Book is a nonprofit organization with a single mission: to give children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own their first new books. Through hundreds of local Advisory Boards, the First Book National Book Bank, and the First Book Marketplace, the organization provides an ongoing supply of new books to children participating in community-based mentoring, tutoring, and family literacy programs. First Book has provided more than 46 million new books to children in need in thousands of communities nationwide. For more information about First Book, please visit www.FirstBook.org.

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