

For Immediate Release

Nine Adolescent Struggling Readers Receive National Award for Overcoming Challenges, Raising Test Scores and Improving School Performance

Muhammad Ali to Honor READ 180 All-Star Award Winners for Their Determination to Succeed in School

New York, NY (April 21, 2005) – Approximately 6 million students in grades six through twelve are reading significantly below grade level. These students are often trapped in a cycle of failure where struggles undermine confidence, critical skills remain undeveloped, and each year they fall further and further behind their peers. In some cases, the inability to read and write proficiently leads to additional problems such as defiance and truancy, and can ultimately result in students dropping out of school and not becoming productive members of their communities.

Today, Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, announced the winners of the second annual **READ 180 All-Star Awards** created to honor students who have broken this cycle. The nine students receiving All-Star awards have each done a 180° turn-around in school and have overcome the myriad of challenges that all older struggling readers confront daily – poor reading skills resulting in low achievement in all subject areas, frustration, and low self-esteem. Some of the award winners faced additional challenges such as learning English as a second language, special education classification or emotional challenges. All of the READ 180 All-Stars confronted these obstacles, worked hard to improve their skills and are now on a path to reading success. Muhammad Ali, who overcame his own struggles with reading as a young man, is joining with Scholastic to recognize and honor the nine All-Stars for their perseverance and determination to turn their lives around and succeed in school.

“The READ 180 All-Star Awards offer teachers an additional opportunity to applaud the hard work and accomplishments of students who are often not recognized for their academic achievements,” said Margery Mayer, President, Scholastic Education. “All of the winners and nominees are truly ‘stars’ because they’ve opened up a world of possibilities by learning to read, the key to success in school and in life. I hope each student continues to work hard to excel in school and strives for a future filled with great possibilities.”

“Having struggled with my own dyslexia, I am especially happy to honor students who overcame their own personal challenges to become accomplished readers,” Muhammad Ali stated. “READ 180 is a way for hard work and dedication to turn anyone’s life around.”

The 2005 READ 180 All-Star Award winners are:

Elementary School Winners

Milan Brown, age 9, grade 4, Lawrenceville, GA

In describing his early struggles with reading, Milan wrote, “It was like reading was a sworn enemy that couldn’t be conquered.” But since enrolling in READ 180, Milan has gained an expansive vocabulary, which he expresses in class and in his writing, and has taken a great interest in nonfiction books. His whole attitude towards reading and learning has changed, and he is striving to be an “A” student.

Milan’s confidence in his schoolwork and enthusiasm for literature has skyrocketed, “When I started READ 180 it was exciting and fun. A whole new world opened up for me. I began to read the books that they offered and other books. Reading is no longer an enemy, it is now my best friend.”

Guadalupe Dominguez, age 13, grade 6, Manitowoc, WI

When Guadalupe moved from Mexico to the United States in 2002 she spoke no English. At the start of the next school year she was enrolled in READ 180 because she was reading significantly below grade level. Over the past two years, she has made tremendous progress and now reads on grade level. In addition, she no longer requires the support of an ELL paraprofessional for help with content area work and she qualifies to be dismissed from READ 180.

According to her teacher, Ms. Depouw, “Guadalupe isn’t satisfied just being ‘at grade level’ anymore. She wants to excel and feels that READ 180 has helped her to achieve this.” Adds Guadalupe, “Last year I read like a first grader or worse because there were too many obstacles in my way. READ 180 has changed my life and I now feel like I can read anything, write anything or spell anything.”

Kevin Ortiz, age 12, grade 6, Placentia, CA

Before entering the READ 180 program, Kevin, an English Language Learner, was unmotivated, defiant and struggled academically in all of his classes. He was categorized as Below Basic on last year’s state test. After five months in READ 180, Kevin was reading on grade level, graduated out of the program and earned grades of all A’s, B’s and C’s this quarter.

According to Kevin, “READ 180 is the best thing that ever happened to me in my life. It has helped me read with more confidence and I changed my attitude towards school. I like this program because it helps students get interested in school and it helps prepare students for anything that comes their way.”

Middle School Winners

George Roper, age 14, grade 7, Mount Pleasant, SC

George had been retained on more than one occasion before entering seventh grade – he was an academically at-risk student who exhibited a lack of interest and motivation, and regularly misbehaved and was removed from class. His attitude towards school was that he had to go but he didn’t have to work. Now according to his teacher Mr. Carroll, “READ 180 has brought out George’s drive and interest in learning and school. His work ethic and attitude have improved so much that our principal is considering jumping him to high school next year. His major motivation is that he now recognizes that education can take him away and give him a better life. He is pushing himself in school in order to go to college for either business or music.”

Reflecting on his change, George commented, “When I was in regular classes I always had trouble ...trouble with my school work and behavior. Now with my READ 180 class, the schoolwork is fun. I’m learning and trying so hard. I do most of my work because I understand what they are teaching. I have completely changed as a student, and I’m very proud of my effort and myself.”

Shadrack Boakye, age 15, grade 8, Brentwood, NY

When Shadrack emigrated to the U.S. from Africa at nine years old he was only educated on a first grade level. His skills in English were very weak and he subsequently had to repeat both fourth and sixth grades. After continuing to struggle academically, he was placed in a special education setting and in seventh grade was enrolled in READ 180, where tests showed he was on a second grade reading level. In less than a year Shadrack has increased his reading comprehension by more than five grade levels and has mastered the skills necessary to begin to take mainstream academic classes next year.

Shadrack wrote about his struggles and accomplishments with reading and writing, “I fought so much to make progress in school. I poured my heart into studying daily but it never worked until I was finally moved into READ 180. As the months started to fly by, I noticed that my reading struggles had taken a deep rest and my mind was continuously working harder and hanging on. Daily pressures were removed from my shoulders. Today I am proud to say that I am at my grade level in reading and writing.”

Jesse Mattics, age 15, grade 8, Olathe, KS

When he first began READ 180, Jesse would not read aloud or participate in small group, and he did not think he had a problem with reading, despite his low-test scores. Today, Jesse’s attitude towards reading and his confidence have skyrocketed. With new reading skills, Jesse has gone from doing no work, to doing it all, from failing his classes to passing with flying colors. He played football for this first time this year, maintaining his grades the entire season in order to stay on the team.

Jesse talked about this transformation, “READ 180 changed me. I was a 15-year-old boy who was failing in English...I started READ 180 and started reading books 12 chapters long, and my English grade is going up. Now I love reading books. Right now I am reading *The Green Mile* by Steven King. I am almost done with the book. This will be the first novel I have ever read in my life!”

High School Winners

Alyssia Amador, age 15, grade 9, LaCrosse, WI

“Have you ever struggled with something so much, you say to yourself what is the use? That is how I felt before my ninth grade teacher introduced me to the READ 180 program where I learned to read and write. All my life I thought I was dumb because I couldn’t read as well as my classmates.”

Alyssia entered high school reading below the basic level, suffering from extreme test anxiety and struggling with a learning disability. READ 180 helped her overcome her fear of reading out loud and has given her faith in her ability to succeed. She now maintains a very respectable B- average and is talking about going to college. “READ 180 helped me get over one of my worst fears. After two weeks with the program, I started to see changes where I wanted to read more and I wanted to read out loud. I wasn’t afraid to take those risks anymore because I can read better than I ever have before.”

Hector Cabrera, age 15, grade 9, Miami, FL

When Hector was first enrolled in READ 180 he was reading on a 3rd-4th grade level and was often suspended for chronic truancy and talking back. In just a few months, Ms. Cole, his READ 180 teacher reported that Hector has, “truly turned around, from a sullen, apathetic young man, to one who is motivated, consistently present [in class] and completes his class work assignments.”

Hector added, “I think READ 180 has helped me a lot. My teacher showed me books that were at my level and that were about things I like to do so that also made it easier to read them. One thing that I have really noticed is that now whenever I read I want to keep on reading the book or passage. I actually want to finish it. I even took another book home with me. I think I have really done a 180 in my life.”

Melissa Henderson, age 17, grade 11, Pierson, FL

Due to a difficult family situation, Melissa had to drop out of school for a short period of time. When she returned, she was behind academically and was enrolled in READ 180 to help her pass Florida’s state reading test, a graduation requirement. Since enrolling in the program, Melissa’s grades have gone up to A’s and B’s, she is making the honor roll and plans to pursue a career in nursing after graduation.

According to Melissa, “Reading is very fun for me now because I understand what I am reading. I do not have to go back and read the same thing over and over again to try and understand it.”

Teachers in READ 180 classrooms all across the country nominated students who have improved a minimum of two grade levels, been recognized by other subject area teachers for turning around their performance in school and shown determination to sustain their improvement and continue to raise their achievement and their aspirations. The nine All-Stars will each receive a \$1,000 check from Scholastic to be used towards furthering their education, a framed certificate, and books to encourage them to continue reading. The students will also receive a personal letter of congratulations from Mr. Ali and a pair of signed boxing gloves. The winning students’ nominating teachers will each receive \$1,000 worth of READ 180 materials to help all their students continue to improve their reading skills.

For a complete list of students nominated for the READ 180 All-Star Awards visit www.scholastic.com/read180.

About Scholastic READ 180

Scholastic READ 180 is a research-based, intensive reading intervention program for students in grades four and above. The program directly addresses students’ individual needs through adaptive and instructional software, high-interest, age appropriate literature, and direct instruction in reading skills. It also features additional support for English Language learners and Special Needs students. The program provides robust support for educators through a complete curriculum of instructional materials, continuous assessment that helps inform instruction, reporting on student performance and professional development. Currently in more than 5,000 classrooms in urban, suburban and rural districts in the United States, the program has consistently proven to be effective in helping to raise reading achievement while motivating and engaging students. More information is available at www.scholastic.com/read180.

About Scholastic

Scholastic Corporation (NASDAQ: SCHL) is the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books and a leader in educational technology. Scholastic creates quality educational and entertaining materials and products for use in school and at home, including children's books, magazines, technology-based products, teacher materials, television programming, film, videos and toys. The Company distributes its products and services through a variety of channels, including proprietary school-based book clubs, school-based book fairs, and school-based and direct-to-home continuity programs; retail stores, schools, libraries and television networks; and the Company's Internet site, www.scholastic.com.

About Muhammad Ali

Over forty years after he burst on the scene as a gold-medal winner at the 1960 Olympics, in Rome, Muhammad Ali remains a magical figure, known and loved throughout the world. As a boxer, Ali brought unprecedented speed and grace to his sport, while his charm and wit changed forever what the public expected a champion to be. But there was always far more to him than what took place in a boxing ring.

Championing the causes of the developing world, especially issues involving children, has become a major focus of Ali's life. Traveling across continents, he has hand-delivered food and medical supplies to such sites as the Harapan Kita Hospital for Children in Jakarta, Indonesia; the street children of Morocco; and Sister Beltran's orphanage for Liberian refugees in the Ivory Coast, to name just a few. He has helped such organizations as the Chicago-based adoption agency, The Cradle; the Make-a-Wish-Foundation; Herbert E Birch Services, an organization that runs a school for handicapped children and young adults and a summer camp for children infected with AIDS.

Daring to go against political policy to help people in need, Ali attended the goodwill missions in Afghanistan and North Korea; delivered sorely needed medical supplies to an embargoed Cuba; traveled to Iraq and secured the release of 15 United States hostages; and upon Nelson Mandela's release, journeyed to South Africa on a benevolent mission.

On November 19, 2005, in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, the Champ will celebrate the culmination of a lifetime dream: the opening of the Muhammad Ali Center. Through exhibitions, educational programming, and public outreach, this international education and cultural organization will share the legacy of Ali and inspire both children and adults to achieve personal greatness and more respectful relationships.

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