

21 March 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**IBBY ANNOUNCES THE WINNERS OF THE 2022
IBBY-IREAD OUTSTANDING READING PROMOTER AWARD**

Sylvia Vardell, Chair of the IBBY Reading Promotion Jury of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) hereby announces the winners of the 2022 IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award. IBBY is very grateful to the generous support and sponsorship of the Shenzhen iRead Foundation in China.

The 2022 winners are: **Zohreh Ghaeni** from Iran, nominated by the IBBY sections in Canada and Iran, and **Jane Kurtz** from the United States nominated by USBBY.

Zohreh Ghaeni is a children's literature expert, lecturer, researcher, and major reading promoter. She has worked as a teacher in rural areas of Iran, studied librarianship and information science at the Open University in Tehran and is now the co-founder and director of the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran founded 20 years ago, which is a non-governmental and non-profit organization. In that capacity, she has directed and co-authored the publication of a ten-volume history of children's literature in Iran, a monumental achievement. As part of the Institute for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran, Zohreh designed and developed a reading programme that has had huge success all over Iran and Afghanistan: *Read With Me*. This project makes high quality books accessible to children who normally do not have access to books, such as street and working children, those living in remote and deprived areas, and those living in crisis due to unrest, natural disaster and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jane Kurtz grew up in Ethiopia and has spent the last 25 years helping to develop indigenous authors and illustrators in Ethiopia—and in multiple languages—while also establishing an infrastructure for publishing books and promoting literacy with training for teachers and librarians. Her work began in 1998 when she co-founded *Ethiopia Reads* and developed a strategy for starting libraries to support literacy development. In early 2016, Jane initiated a workshop in Ethiopia with artists, children and adult volunteers, which resulted in a prototype for *Ready Set Go* books. Created in partnership with *Open Hearts Big Dreams*, these books are colourful, easy-to-read, culturally appropriate, and published in English and one local language. Jane's work with literacy addresses the challenges of multiple official languages; lack of books reflecting Ethiopian culture, history, and landscape; obstacles in the translation, publication, and distribution process; and insufficient professional opportunities for educators and librarians. With her vision and collaboration with others, she has planted the seeds of literacy all over Ethiopia.

Both of these amazing women—Zohreh Ghaeni in Iran and Jane Kurtz in Ethiopia—are inspiring examples of reading promoters who show us how one person can truly make a difference, especially when we work together!

The 2022 Jury comprised:

Constanza Mekis (Chile), Doris Breitmoser (Germany), Elena Pasoli (Italy), Basarat Kazim (Pakistan), Sophie Hallam (UK), Wen Li (China) and Sylvia Vardell (USA) as Chair.

The other nominated projects for the 2022 IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award are:

Durowaa Amponsah Mensah, Adenta, nominated by IBBY Ghana

Ævar Thor Benediktsson, Reykjavik, nominated by IBBY Iceland

Kirsten Boie, Barsbüttel, nominated by IBBY Germany

Murti Bunanta, Jakarta, nominated by IBBY Indonesia

Hugo Waldemar Cubilla, Buenos Aires, nominated by IBBY Argentina

Darja Lavrenčič Vrabec, Ljubljana, nominated by IBBY Slovenia

Rose-Marie Lindfors, Skellefteå, nominated by IBBY Sweden

Mei Zihan, Shanghai, nominated by IBBY China

Sathyanarayan Mundayoor, Arunachal Pradesh, nominated by IBBY India

Sayyed Nader Musavi, Tehran, nominated by IBBY Iran

Michèle Petit, Paris, nominated by IBBY France

Slavko Pregl, Ljubljana, nominated by IBBY Slovenia

About the International Board on Books for Young People – IBBY

The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) is a non-profit organization, which represents an international network of people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together.

IBBY's mission is

- to promote international understanding through children's books;
- to give children everywhere the opportunity to have access to books with high literary and artistic standards;
- to encourage the publication and distribution of quality children's books, especially in developing countries;
- to provide support and training for those involved with children and children's literature;
- to stimulate research and scholarly works in the field of children's literature;
- to protect and uphold the Rights of the Child according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Contact:

For more information, about the winners and about IBBY go to www.ibby.org or write to Executive Director Liz Page at: liz.page@ibby.org