



NEWS RELEASE

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Judith's Reading Room Inaugurates its Literacy Chair Award

Needham, MA Artist is Celebrated in New York City

October 3, 2022. New York, New York — Judith's Reading Room, a literacy nonprofit founded in 2010 in the memory of Judith F. Krug, a librarian, dedicated an original piece of art — a decoupage chair — of the Ezra Jack Keats famous The Snowy Day, designed by Needham, MA artist and founder of Storytime Crafts, Lisa Tedeschi Vergara. The chair was dedicated in honor of Dr. Lisette Caesar, founder and past principal of Mosaic Preparatory Academy, East Harlem, NY. Dr. Caesar retired in June 2022. It illustrates the power of literacy through art.

The Literacy Chair Award, inaugurated in October 2022, is in honor of or in memory of a champion of literacy nominated by a Judith's Reading Room member of the Board of Directors.

“In recognition of her incessant and energetic focus to engage children in reading, Judith's Reading Room names Dr. Lisette Caesar its first *Literacy Chair Award* recipient,” announced Cathy Leiber, President, Judith's Reading Room. Dr. Caesar's favorite childhood book, The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats is the theme of the chair which is meant to spread the joy of reading.

As principal and founder of a Title 1 school, with a large population of students living in temporary housing, Dr. Caesar set as a goal to put 100 books into the hands of each of her scholars. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she installed a Free Little Library so that the entire community could have books while the school was shutdown. Her innovative Book Vending Machine, which rewards good behavior, has succeeded in increasing reading motivation and has been shared with several New York City schools.

For her lifetime of work centered on literacy, Caesar has been honored twice by Judith's Reading Room. First, in 2021, she was named its Freedom Through Literacy



Award 'Honorable Mention' and this year she won a Freedom Through Literacy Board Option Award for her Book Vending Machine.

The Snowy Day chair was dedicated October 3rd in honor of Dr. Lisette Caesar, past principal of Mosaic Preparatory Academy, seated. Standing (L) Ms. Ariel Birdoff, Librarian and (R) Cathy Leiber, President, Judith's Reading Room

When asked who she thought should get the honor of sitting in The Snowy Day chair,? Dr. Caesar instantly replied, "each month, the child who read the most books or the one who made the most significant progress in reading during the previous month."

Joining in the dedication celebration, Caesar was surrounded by the 2022 Kindergarten classes, their teachers and librarians, Ms. Daliz Vasquez, interim principal, Ty Allan Jackson, author, Dr. Kristy DeLa Cruz, Superintendent, School District 4 and Stephanie Herrera, Bronx Outreach Coordinator from Hon. Diana Ayala's New York City Council 8th Council District.

Judith's Reading Room

Judith's Reading Room was founded in 2010 in the memory of the founders' first cousin, Judith F. Krug, who served as Director of Intellectual Freedom for the American Library Association for 40 years. The organization's mission is to enrich lives and societies by proactively encouraging freedom through literacy. We have fulfilled that mission by establishing 103 libraries (and counting!) in 22 countries with nearly 132,000 books worth \$1,420,000.

The Freedom Through Literacy Award, now in its 8th year, honors individual champions of literacy from all disciplines around the world — teachers, librarians, authors, researchers, nonprofit literacy organizations, educators — anyone who has done

exemplary work to instill in others a love of reading. To date, the organization has disbursed \$48,500 in cash awards to 47 champions of literacy. Winners hail from 14 countries, including nine states in the United States. Applications for the 2023 Freedom Through Literacy Award will be posted on www.judithsreadingroom.org beginning November 1, 2022.

The Founders' Award, inaugurated in September 2022, is a cash prize at the discretion of Judith's Reading Room founders to honor literacy heroes who have had to overcome immense obstacles in order to enrich lives through literacy. Ms. Basarat Kazim, Alif Laila Book Bus Society, Lahore, Pakistan and Ms. Simon Ke, Anjali House, Siem Reap, Cambodia are the recipients of the 2022 Award, each winning a cash prize of \$1,000.

The Literacy Chair Award, inaugurated in October 2022, is in honor of or in memory of a champion of literacy nominated by a Judith's Reading Room member of the Board of Directors. The Literacy Chair Award is a beautifully crafted decoupage story-themed chair, from Storytime Crafts, a charitable nonprofit organization in Needham, Massachusetts. Judith's Reading Room selected Storytime's chair for its Literacy Chair Award because it illustrates the power of literacy through art. Dr. Lisette Caesar is named recipient of the inaugural 2022 Literacy Chair Award.

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