

MEDIA

2 Awards for Multicultural Books

A month ago a nonprofit called First Book, which promotes literacy among children in low-income communities, announced the Stories for All project, a program intended to prod publishers to print more multicultural books. Kyle Zimmer, First Book's chief executive, says that part of the motivation was the "chasm" between the number of people who want such books and what is available.

On Wednesday, First Book will announce that awards of \$500,000 will go to two publishers for their proposals for the project: HarperCollins, the big publishing house owned by News Corporation, and Lee & Low, a minority-owned independent publisher.

Some 24 publishers responded to the competition, Ms. Zimmer said, and First Book felt that the submissions were so good that it decided to give two awards instead of one. As part of the arrangement, First Book will add nearly 500 new books to an online

store for purchase at a low cost by its 50,000 member organizations, which all serve children in low-income communities.

Ms. Zimmer said that because of the short lead time for the competition, not all of the books submitted were by new or minority authors. She said those would follow as the award and related market became better known.

First Book says that while there is great interest within low-income communities for high-quality books featuring diverse characters and cultures, publishers have not served them well because they are unsure of the market. Ms. Zimmer said that in challenging economic times, publishers "revert to market strategies that have served them historically, but the problem is that they are missing the larger market."

First Book argues that it is in a position to cater to that larger market and make it a force.

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