

National Book Festival Celebrated in Washington on September 30

by Megan Schulz, Legislative Reference Assistant

The 6th annual National Book Festival organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress and hosted by First Lady Laura Bush, was held on September 30th, 2006 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. with an estimated crowd of over 100,000 people. The Kansas Center for the Book and the State Library of Kansas sent Jeanne Mithen from Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library and Megan Schulz from the State Library of Kansas to represent our state.

The festival touts something for everyone with pavilions devoted to such genres as Fiction and Fantasy, History and Biography, Home and Family, Teens and Children, Mysteries and Thrillers and Poetry. Seventy best-selling authors were in attendance and took time to autograph books and speak with the public. Also recognized were the six national winners of the "Letters and Literature" contest. Children had a chance to meet favorite storybook characters including Elmo, Curious George and Clifford.



***View of Tents from top of
Washington Monument***

The Pavilion of the States has representatives from every state and territory. Featured book at the Kansas table was *Oceans of Kansas* by Michael Everhart, 2006 Notable Book Award recipient. Promotional flyers were available showing the dramatic cover art. Other popular items distributed were road maps, wildflower brochures, highlighters, pens, candy, stickers and catalogs filled with books about Kansas or by Kansas authors.

Information given out by each state details the events and projects focused around literature with regard to local reading and literacy programs. We took this forum to promote, among other projects, the Kansas Book Festival which was being held concurrently with the National Festival. I took the opportunity myself to visit the other states to pick up ideas for next year's event, and, most importantly, for the Kansas Book Festival and other events held in Kansas.

Maps of the United States were obtainable and children in particular enjoyed visiting each state and receiving a stamp or sticker to represent it. This provided an opportunity to give children a quick geography lesson and we were pleasantly surprised that the vast majority knew where Kansas was located, so they earned themselves a sunflower stamp!



Kansas Center for the Book Booth at National Book Festival



Megan Schulz, State Library, left, and Jeanne Mithen, TSCPL

The final count was 20,000 people who visited the Pavilion of the States, making it a long day, but it was a great chance to share the projects in literature that we are working on in Kansas. Next year the goal is to distribute even more information focusing on state projects and also on the unique qualities of Kansas which can be found in its great books!



National Book Festival Visitors