November 12, 2012

Dear Oregon Librarian,

In 2009, the Oregon Library Association sponsored Oregon Reads to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Oregon statehood. The program was a phenomenal success, with 80,000 Oregonians participating in community reading programs throughout the state.

In 2014, OLA is going to do it again. This time we are going to celebrate the centennial of Oregon’s greatest poet, William Stafford. OLA will be joining with many other organizations throughout the state in this centennial celebration. Our goal is to once again involve 80,000 Oregonians in *Oregon Reads 2014*, in communities and on campuses throughout the state.

**This letter is your invitation to have your library take part in *Oregon Reads 2014*.**

***Who Was William Stafford?***

William Stafford was born in Hutchinson, Kansas, in 1914, and died at his home in Lake Oswego, in 1993, at the age of 79. Between 1960 and 1993, William Stafford wrote more than 60 published collections of poetry and prose, including 12 full-length books of poems. Stafford’s first book of poetry, *West of Your City*, was published in 1960 when he was 46 years old. His second, *Traveling Through the Dark*, won the National Book Award in 1963. All but one of his books was written in Oregon. When William Stafford died in 1993, the poet Robert Bly predicted that, "Bill's poetry will be more widely read in the next century than in this one."

William Stafford was also an influential and beloved teacher of writing. He served as Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress (the post now known as United States Poet Laureate) during 1970-71 and as Poet Laureate of Oregon from 1975 through 1989.

Stafford grew up during the Great Depression in central and southwest Kansas, with an appreciation for nature, the Great Plains, and books. As a pacifist and conscientious objector during World War II, Stafford did alternative service in civilian work camps in Arkansas, California and Illinois. After the war, Stafford worked for the Church World Service relief organization, taught high school and finished his master's degree in English at the University of Kansas. His master’s thesis, a memoir of his wartime experience in the civilian work camps, was published as *Down in My Heart* in 1947 and is still in print from Oregon State University Press. In 1948, Stafford joined the faculty of Lewis & Clark College, where he taught until his retirement in 1980.

Stafford's poems tend to be short and deceptively simple. His plain-spoken style invites readers into the poems, which often take unexpected turns toward discovery. His poems are at once quiet and tough-minded, clear and mysterious, open-hearted and sly, serious and funny, witty and down-to-earth. While grounded in day-to-day life and local experience, they also touch on universal concerns, from war and peace to the tension between individual freedom and social responsibility.

***About Oregon Reads 2014***

*Oregon Reads 2014* will be modeled closely on our successful Oregon Reads 2009. Oregon libraries will select one or more Stafford-related books and ask everyone in their community to read them and to attend library programs that celebrate them. An important difference between Oregon Reads 2009 and *Oregon Reads 2014* is that OLA will not be selecting one book for everyone to read. For *Oregon Reads 2014* we will give every library the autonomy to select your own books. We do suggest that libraries select one or more of the following in-print and forthcoming books to use for your community reading program:

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| Early Morning.jpg | *Early Morning: Remembering My Father, William Stafford*  by Kim Stafford  Graywolf Press, $16 paperback  "As a book written by a son warily loving an enigmatic, elusive father, this is a masterpiece." *— Robert Bly* |
| *Ask Me:*  *100 Selected Poems* by William Stafford  (forthcoming) | Kim Stafford is currently editing a new selection of 100 best poems by his father that will be published in the fall of 2013.  Graywolf Press, $16 paperback |
| down in my heart.jpg | *Down in My Heart: Peace Witness in War Time*  by William Stafford, introduction by Kim Stafford  Oregon State University Press, $15.95 paperback  “Down in My Heart is not only Stafford’s first book, but in some ways it is his most important book because it lays out the radical social and moral code by which he lived his life as a pacifist, a code that underlies every poem he ever wrote.” —The Bloomsbury Review |
| Two Losers.jpg | *Every War Has Two Losers: William Stafford on Peace and War*  by William Stafford, edited with an introduction by Kim Stafford  Milkweed Editions, $16 paperback  "Stafford offers a lifetime of lyrically posed observations postulated from the perspective of a peacemaker. He pricks the thoughtful and intellectual processes of adult and young adult readers to consider alternate solutions in resolving conflicts.” *— Plainfield Sun* |

About these books, Kim Stafford has said, “These books touch on family, growing up, a sense of place, life-long learning, and the ethical foundations of citizenship, and this program will give library patrons a wide range of interests to pursue. The goal of *Oregon Reads* is not to study poetry, but rather to use these books in seeking our deeper identity as Oregonians.”

The Oregon Library Association will support *Oregon Reads 2014* by providing a list of speakers who are willing and able to make library appearances in 2014, a website with information and graphics that can be used by participating libraries, and mini-grants to encourage participation by small and rural Oregon public libraries. Mini-grants will range between $500 and $1,000 depending on the size of the library and can be used to support book purchases, speaker costs or promotion of *Oregon Reads 2014*.

***What Are We Asking You to Do?***

Please talk to your staff, and your support groups (Friends, Foundation, etc.) about participating in *Oregon Reads 2014*. We hope that libraries with their own community reading programs will replace their home-grown program with *Oregon Reads* in 2014. There is no time designated for *Oregon Reads* in 2014. You can plan your program for any time in the calendar year.

Between now and January 15th, we hope you will decide to participate in *Oregon Reads 2014*. To participate, you will need to return the attached participation form to the *Oregon Reads 2014* Steering Committee. A tentative commitment will be fine, but we need to hear from libraries by January 15th in order to continue to make plans for the statewide reading program. If you are a director of a small, rural library, please indicate if you would be interested in receiving a mini-grant to support your participation. Based on the need, we will be seeking support from Oregon charitable foundations to fund the mini-grants.

If you have questions for the *Oregon Reads 2014* Steering Committee please feel free to email them to **oregonreads2014@gmail.com** and we will answer them promptly.

On behalf of the Oregon Library Association, we want to thank you for considering this unique opportunity to engage readers in your community or campus with the life, legacy and works of Oregon’s greatest poet.

Sincerely,

***Oregon Reads 2014* Steering Committee**

*Jim Scheppke, State Librarian Emeritus*

*June Knudson, Retired Director, Hood River County Library*

*Sara Charlton, Tillamook County Library*

*Judith Norton, Oregon Health and Sciences University Library*

*Bill Baars, Lake Oswego Public Library*

*Katie Anderson, Oregon State Library*

*Lee Catalano, Multnomah County Library*

*Chantal Strobel, Deschutes Public Library*

Attachment: Oregon Reads 2014 Participation Form

Oregon Reads 2014 Participation Form

***Deadline: January 15, 2013***

Return to: Oregon Reads 2014 Steering Committee

c/o Tillamook County Library

1716 3rd Street

Tillamook, OR 97141

Library Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person’s Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person’s Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Check all that apply:*

⬜ This is a firm commitment to participate in Oregon Reads 2014.

⬜ This is a tentative commitment to participate in Oregon Reads 2014.

⬜ Our small, rural public library is interested in receiving a mini-grant.

⬜ Our community reading program will take place in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

(month or time of year)

⬜ We haven’t decided when our community reading program will take place.

*Certification of Oregon Reads 2014 Participation Form*

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Library Director Signature

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Date