

## MSLA Bookmark Contest: Celebration and Advocacy by Ann Perham

It was April 2, 2009 and we were assembled at the Great Staircase in the State House. MSLA president, Sandy Kelly was explaining the history of the Bookmark Contest to the parents, legislators. "How many years is this for the Bookmark Contest?" I was standing at the back of the room and I was momentarily stunned; it had been six years since the first contest. I don't really remember how I responded to Sandy, but I know it wasn't a profound statement. As Gerri Fegan, MSLA president-elect called up the 2009 winners and the legislators shook their hands while parents captured the moments on film, my mind wandered back in time.



My "theme song" as president of MSLMA was SHOUT! It was 2003 and the budget ax was coming down on many Massachusetts library programs. My theory was that too many library teachers are invisible, quietly working to make others look good and reluctant to take the credit. In September, I called for volunteers for a task force to plan a celebration for School Library Month 2004 as an opportunity to SHOUT and to shine. To my knowledge, we had never had a significant MSLA sponsored statewide event for School Library Month. My goal was that 2004 would be different.

A student in the school library graduate program at Salem State named Judi Paradis volunteered to spearhead the effort. She and her task force met through the fall of 2003 to brainstorm what a fitting activity would be. In April of that first year, 2004, Judi and her task force had two events, the bookmark contest and a bulletin board contest. In the six years since that first contest, the MSLA Bookmark Contest has evolved to yield far more than I had dared to predict, far beyond a celebration of School Library Month.

**Emerging Leaders** Judi Paradis has played a role in each of the six contests, and has gone on to be the Advocacy/Legislation chair. In 2009 she was elected to be the MSLA secretary. Someone named Gerri Fegan joined the Bookmark Contest task force in 2004, lending her spirit and determination. Soon, Gerri became our Northeast Area Director and is now beginning her term as president of MSLA. For the 2009 contest, Gerri recruited Linda Coviello to the task force; Linda began her term as MetroWest Area Director in June.

**A Tool for Advocacy** The MSLA board soon realized the possibilities for the Bookmark Contest. With a little tweaking of the calendar, they combined the awards ceremony with the MSLA Legislation Day. Instantly, we had a "hook" to grab the attention of the legislators who grant citations and personal tours of the State House.

**Important Connections** Who will judge the bookmarks? Through the years, we have used the judging panel as an advocacy tool. Members of the Board of Library Commissioners have graciously accepted the position of judges: Em Claire Knowles, Vicky Kaufman and Irving Zangwill. The listing of author/illustrator judges is impressive: Stephen Krensky, Mary Newell DePalma, Brian Lies, David Biedrzycki, Mitali Perkins, Janet Tasjian, Jarrett Krosoczka, Nancy Werlin, Diane Mayr, Kathleen Duple, Lisa Greenleaf, Muriel Dubois, and special guest Emily Elizabeth Bridwell (Clifford's owner).

The Bookmark Contest is well-entrenched in our organization, and we have an amazing pool of entries submitted each year. The MSLA Bookmarks have even been exhibited at the Eric Carle Museum!

**Yes, we are SHOUTing and I am SMILEing.**



**2009 Judging Panel was a Festival of Authors & Illustrators:**

[l-r] Seated in Front: Jarred Krosoczka, Mary Newell DePalma, MSLA president-elect Gerri Fegan, Nancy Werlin, Diane Mayr

Standing: Kathleen Duple, Lisa Greenleaf, Muriel Dubois, and Ann Perham (MSLA past president and AASL Region I Director-Elect)

**2009 Bookmark Contest Winners** Contest Theme: *School Libraries: Learning for Life*

**DIVISION 1 Gr K-1**



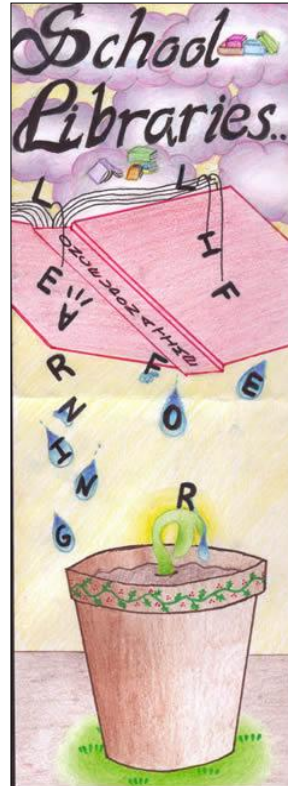
Brooke Elliott, Grade 1  
Great Oak School, Danvers  
Lisa Swaine,  
Library Aide

**DIVISION 2 Gr 2-3**



Rachel Shereda, Grade 2  
Peirce Elementary, Newton  
Jamie Lightfoot,  
Library Teacher

**DIVISION 3 Gr 4-6**



Minna Wang, Grade 6  
Overlook Middle, Ashburnham  
Julie Farrell,  
Library Teacher

**DIVISION 4 Gr 7-12**



Jaime Peck, Grade 12  
Belchertown High School  
Maryanne O'Brien,  
Library Teacher

**Statistics from the 6 years of the Bookmark Contest: Winning Traditions**

MSLA Member	School	Winner	Honorable Mentions **
Eileen Barnacoat / Julie Farrell	Overlook Middle School, Ashburnham	2009, Division 3 2007, Division 3 2006, Division 4 2004, Division 4	2007, Division 4
Nancy Snow	Bancroft School, Andover	2006, Division 2	2009, Division 1    2009, Division 3 2008, Division 2    2007, Division 1 2007, Division 2
Claire Pagnotta	Beebe Elementary, Malden	2008, Division 2 2005, Division 1	
Linda Coviello	Job Lane School, Bedford	2007, Division 2	2007, Division 2    2007, Division 3
Maryann O'Brien	Belchertown High School	2009, Division 4	2007, Division 4
Katherine Covintree	Bishop Feehan High School	2008, Division 4	2005, Division 1
Lorraine Miller / Lisa Swaine	Great Oak School, Danvers	2009, Division 1	2007, Division 2
Gerri Fegan and Laura Harrington	West Middle School, Andover		2008, Division 3    2008, Division 3

**\*\*Note:** Honorable Mentions from 2004-06 were "lost" on the old MSLMA.org site. Apologies to the many Honorable Mentions!