



For Immediate Release

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**TOP THREE CONTRIBUTORS
TO HOMESCHOOLING IN 2004 HONORED**

**Homeschooling's Best Awards Given for
Lifetime Achievement, Advocacy, Heroism**

(Baltimore, MD) – Three people whose efforts improved homeschooling during last year were honored as the 2004 recipients of Homeschooling's Best awards.

The awards, sponsored by Calvert School, the first formal homeschool curriculum provider in the United States, recognized people in three categories – Lifetime Achievement, Advocate and Hero. The Lifetime Achievement Award is the first the Homeschooling's Best Committee has awarded.

The 2004 recipients are:

- Homeschooling's Best Lifetime Achievement Award – Christopher J. Klicka, Purcellville, Va.
- Homeschooling's Best Hero – Jessica Sara Halpern, 12, Sherman Oaks, Calif.
- Homeschooling's Best Advocate – Kay Brooks, Nashville, Tenn.

“In a year when great strides were made in homeschooling, these people's contributions set a new standard,” said Jean C. Halle, president of Calvert School Education Services, the

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homeschool curriculum provider affiliated with the prestigious Calvert School in Baltimore, Md. “Each of these recipients helped better homeschooling through their dedication to homeschooling.”

The Homeschooling’s Best Committee at Calvert School reviewed the accomplishments of more than 60 people, nominated by the public, before selecting this year’s recipients. This marks the third year for this award and the second year where the public was asked to submit nominations to the Calvert School website at www.calvertschool.org.

“The three individuals chosen for this honor made a significant contribution in bringing attention to homeschooling in positive ways,” said Kelly Painter, co-chair of the Homeschooling’s Best Committee. Painter is director of academic services at Calvert School.

Recipients of the 2004 Homeschooling’s Best awards are:

Homeschooling’s Best Lifetime Achievement Award -- Christopher J. Klicka

Senior Counsel and Director of State and International Relations for the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA), Purcellville, Va.

Christopher J. Klicka has played a central role for 20 years through his efforts to get legislatures, local school boards, international bodies and others to understand and appreciate the great benefits of homeschooling through his work with the Home School Legal Defense Association, a non-profit, international advocacy organization for homeschoolers based in Virginia.

In 2004, Klicka was instrumental in expanding the reach of homeschooling. He successfully lobbied a quarter of the states to legislate needed protections for innocent parents under investigation by social workers. In October, he negotiated with the Department of Defense to expand its opportunities for recruits who were homeschooled. He convinced New York state education authorities to recognize the validity of homeschooling for the purpose of obtaining a degree at any public college in the state. Klicka also is the foremost American advocate of

- MORE -

international homeschooling, evidenced by his success in 2004 of keeping it legal in the Czech Republic and supporting efforts to legalize it in Germany, as well as giving advice and aid to local homeschoolers in more than two dozen countries.

Klicka's passion for homeschooling has never wavered no matter what challenges he faced.

A homeschooling father of seven children, Klicka is a popular homeschooling speaker and author, whose topics have brought a greater understanding and acceptance of homeschooling. Klicka spoke at more than seven homeschooling conferences in 2004, giving encouragement and support to more than 10,000 homeschoolers. During his career, he authored *The Right Choice: Homeschooling*, *The Heart of Home Schooling*, *The Right to Home School: A Guide to the Law on Parents Rights in Education*, *Home Schooling in the United States: A Legal Analysis*, and several other books.

Homeschooling's Best Hero -- Jessica Sara Halpern, 12, Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Jessica Sara Halpern, 12, of Sherman Oaks, Calif., began collecting blankets last spring as part of a homeschooling project. Her mother, Chellie Grossman, was attempting to teach her daughter about the homeless, a group that Jessica feared, when Jessica suggested a campaign to collect 100 blankets for homeless people. "Her blanket was the first thing that gave her comfort, and she wanted these people to have the same comfort even though they are without homes," Grossman explained.

Jessica collected blankets from friends, family, neighbors and acquaintances using a flier she created on her computer, cards she handed out to people she met explaining the campaign and collection bins at her synagogue, Congregation Meier Synagogue in Studio City. Her initial success led her to increase the goal to 200 blankets, which went to Beyond Shelter in Los Angeles, Project Achieve in Glendale, the Teen Canteen in Hollywood, the Family Service

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Agency of Burbank, and the Burbank Temporary Aid Shelter.

Edward Stapleton, pantry manager for the Burbank Temporary Aid Center, said Jessica's project is unusual in several ways. First, children often aren't aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. Second, the 21 blankets she provided his center were high quality blankets that will last longer than most. "Jessica is young and articulate and refreshing to us because she has a mindset toward helping the homeless. She gave us real heavy, good blankets that will last and that makes a difference to the recipients."

Though the project ended last summer, she has now collected more than 500 blankets for the homeless.

Homeschooling's Best Advocate – Kay Brooks

Founder, TnHomeEd.com, Nashville, Tenn.

Kay Brooks of Nashville, Tenn., brought together, through a website she founded and maintains, hundreds of Tennesseans over the last year in an effort to convince the state legislature to modify its HOPE Scholarship requirements to give homeschoolers a fair chance at competing. Under the old law, homeschoolers had to score a 1060 on their SATs to qualify for the lottery-funded scholarships, compared to the 890 other students had to reach. Working closely with several homeschooling organizations, Brooks, mother of four homeschooled children, provided through her website, www.TnHomeEd.com, updated reports, gathered from lobbyists and others involved in the effort. She also provided contacts, links, and suggestions for how homeschoolers could make their voice heard.

Brooks' efforts, according to Mike Bell, lobbyist for the Tennessee Home Education Association, were "absolutely critical" to the success of the effort. Legislators heard from many of the 40,000 to 60,000 homeschoolers in the state through their letters, emails and calls, many of

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which were sparked by Brooks' dedication and hard work.

Brooks started the website to help people interested in homeschooling in Tennessee accurate and updated information about the laws and other aspects of homeschooling so they could have the same opportunity as she has been able to give her family through homeschooling.

Nominations for the 2005 Homeschooling's Best Awards can be submitted throughout the year to www.calvertschool.org/best.

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Members of the Media: To arrange interviews with any of the recipients or the co-chairs of the Homeschooling's Best Committee, please contact Bob Graham at 410-785-3400, ext. 3332, or by pager at 410-796-6616.

About Calvert School

Since 1906, Calvert School, a not-for-profit organization, has been providing students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade with a complete, integrated, and accredited curriculum that leaves no gaps in instruction. Calvert's detailed, step-by-step lessons are based on teaching at Calvert School in Baltimore, Md. The time-tested Calvert program inspires children to reach their full academic potential and helps parents to be effective home teachers. In addition to the Calvert homeschooling program, Calvert's lessons have been employed successfully in classroom settings throughout the world for more than 60 years. During the last decade, more than 186,000 students have enrolled in Calvert's home instruction program.

To learn more, visit Calvert's web site at www.calvertschool.org.