



For Immediate Release

Contact: Bob Graham
410-785-3400, ext. 3332
Cell Phone 410-241-8980

2005 HOMESCHOOLING'S BEST AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

Contributions Noted for Heroism, Pioneering, Advocacy, and Voice

(Baltimore, MD) – The people behind four efforts that improved the image and reputation of homeschooling during 2005 are being honored as the 2005 recipients of Homeschooling's Best Awards.

The awards, sponsored by Calvert School, recognize people who have improved homeschooling in four categories – Hero, Pioneer, Advocate and Voice.

The 2005 recipients are:

- Homeschooling's Best Heroes – The Dykema family of Tallmadge Township, Mich.
- Homeschooling's Best Advocate – Peter Hrycenko of Allentown, Pa.
- Homeschooling's Best Pioneer – Eric and Joyce Burges of Baker, La.
- Homeschooling's Best Voice – Rebecca Catalanello of *The St. Petersburg Times*

“In a year when great strides were made in homeschooling, these honorees set a new standard,” said Jean C. Halle, president of Calvert School Education Services, the homeschool curriculum provider affiliated with the prestigious Calvert School in Baltimore, Md. Calvert's home instruction program celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2006.

“Each of these recipients helped improve homeschooling through their dedication to

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homeschooling,” Halle added.

Before selecting this year’s recipients, the Homeschooling’s Best Awards Committee at Calvert School reviewed the accomplishments of more than 70 people nominated by the public. This marks the fourth year for these awards, the only ones to recognize homeschooling achievements.

“The recipients in 2005 each made significant contributions 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 2005 Homeschooling’s Best awards are:

Homeschooling’s Best Heroes – The Dykema Family of Tallmadge Township, Mich.

The lives of two men from Wyoming were saved with the quick actions of the Dykema family. When two anglers capsized a boat in a small lake in Michigan, the Dykema family dropped its homeschooling to race to save the lives of both men.

Police say that on Oct. 11, as she and the other members of the Dykema family were homeschooling in their home, Lydia Dykema, 13, noticed a capsized boat and two men struggling in the deep waters outside of their home in Tallmadge Township, Mich. Lydia alerted her mother and siblings, and the family sprang into action.

While Moriah, 11, called 911, giving clear instructions about a possible drowning, her brother, Jesse, 15, paddled in a family kayak toward the men; his mother, Deb Dykema, also maneuvered a paddleboat to the scene; and Lydia piloted another kayak in their direction.

Within moments, Jesse was pulling Ed Dantuma, 63, from the cold water, just as he began to go under for the last time in Skipping Stone Lake. The family pulled Dantuma to the shore, along with the boat’s other occupant, Elmer Snoap, 76, where Abby, 17, helped by covering them with blankets until rescuers arrived.

The Dykema family is credited by both the Ottawa County police and the two fishermen for being lifesavers, who acted in a carefully planned, safe manner that assured that none of the rescuers were injured

In selecting the Dykemas, the committee was impressed with the family’s calm in a tense

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situation, its ability to quickly assign and complete life-saving tasks, and its willingness to get involved, rather than just call and await help. The family's decisions reinforce that homeschoolers are active participants in their communities, not bystanders.

Homeschooling's Best Pioneers – Joyce and Eric Burges of Baker, La.

When Joyce and Eric Burges began homeschooling in fall 1989, the couple was one of the few African American families who had chosen this option. Realizing that little information was available to the black community on resources and how to go about homeschooling, Joyce and Eric Burges formed an organization, the National Black Home Education Resource Association, to provide black families with information and resources to homeschool. Since its start in 2000, the group has continued to grow.

In 2002, the group expanded its reach through the Internet with a Website, www.nbhera.org, which Joyce Burges describes as “a place where people can go and feel the warmth that a homeschool family's home would have.” The site features links to state laws, local contacts, how to homeschool information, and hurricane relief resources.

In addition to the Website and the organization, Eric and Joyce Burges, a professional singer and homeschool mother of five, take part in more than 25 interviews a year about homeschooling. Eric Burges is a budget manager with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.

The growth of the National Black Home Education Resource Association parallels the growth in homeschooling among African Americans.

Homeschooling's Best Advocate – Peter Hrycenko of Allentown, Pa.

The debate over whether homeschoolers should be allowed to participate in public school sports and other extracurricular programs has been going on for several years. Fifteen states allow statewide equal access to homeschoolers, while others prohibit it or leave the decision to local schools and school boards. In September 2000, Peter Hrycenko learned that the Allentown School District would not allow his son, Nestor, then 14, to play soccer on the local public school team.

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Hrycenko, father of seven homeschooled children, questioned the school board and other community leaders. He even filed suit, seeking an injunction requiring the local school board to allow his son to play soccer. Unsuccessful, he waged a five-year campaign to get the state law changed to require all school districts to open their extracurricular sports and activities to homeschoolers. In a state with 501 school districts, about half, including four neighboring Hrycenko's school district, allowed it. After a campaign that included taking part in media interviews, writing opinion pieces for newspapers and magazines, lobbying legislators, meeting with homeschool advocates and legislative staff members and attending countless other meetings, the law was finally passed this year.

On Nov. 10, Pennsylvania Gov. Rendell signed the law, requiring all 501 school districts to open their doors to homeschoolers who want to participate in athletics and other extracurricular activities.

"You can't give up. You have to keep plugging away. Keep bringing it up because you want all children in all states to have the opportunity to participate in these activities," Hrycenko said. "It only takes at first a few motivated homeschoolers to approach their state capital legislators, find any existing equal access bills, and if no bill exists, then pursue feisty legislators to introduce bills, and most important, try to win help from legislative leaders."

Because of his efforts, his son Nestor played one year of high school soccer and his daughter, Darya, 16, now participates in cross country and soccer at her local public school.

His devotion to ensuring homeschoolers are treated equally in Pennsylvania serves as a model of homeschooling advocacy for 2005.

Homeschooling's Best Voice – Rebecca Catalanello of *The St. Petersburg Times*.

Rebecca Catalanello, an education reporter, began investigating homeschooling shortly after her arrival at *The St. Petersburg Times* in May 2003 at the suggestion of Mike Moscardini, North Suncoast metro editor for the paper. Over two years, Catalanello, a reporter for eight years, continued to interview and visit with homeschooling families in her area. The results of that work

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was a piece appearing in the paper on June 26, 2005, entitled, "Homeschooling: It's Not What You Think"

Besides communicating Catalanello's new understanding of homeschooling, the article debunked many of the common media myths about homeschooling. Catalanello used the words and stories of several families she met while doing her research to explain the various and diverse facets of homeschooling. She said, "I was immediately amazed at how strong, how organized these women were, and how they all wanted to spend time with their children."

As the judges for the Homeschooling's Best Award explained, Catalanello's article voices many aspects of homeschooling that are all-too-often missed in stories about homeschooling.

Nominations for the 2006 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 the recipients or Homeschooling's Best Committee members, contact Bob Graham at 410-785-3400, ext. 3332, or 410-241-8980 (cell).

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 the teacher be more effective.

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. More than 500,000 students in home, public, private, charter, virtual or cyber, and international schools have been educated with the Calvert program over the last 100 years.

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