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**Massachusetts Center for the Book to promote “Growing Up Pedro” at National Book Fest in Washington, D.C.**

Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB) will be representing the Bay State at the sixteenth annual National Book Festival on September 24<sup>th</sup>, hosted by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Celebrating the joy and power of reading, the nation’s largest free book festival is annually attended by nearly 200,000 booklovers of all ages.

More than 120 acclaimed authors, poets and illustrators, at the invitation of the world’s largest library, will discuss and sign their work across the spectrum of reading interests, including Children, Teens, Fiction, History and Biography, Poetry and Prose, Science, Books to Movies, Contemporary Life, Graphic Novels, Food and Home, and International Literature.

A substantial cohort from Massachusetts is on the schedule, including Jabari Asim, Aaron Becker, Ali Benjamin, Geraldine Brooks, Justin Cronin, Kelly Link, and Lois Lowry. Stephen King will headline the Main Stage, and other New England authors, poets and illustrators appearing include Ken Burns, Elizabeth Hand, Jo Knowles, Peter Kramer, Joseph Mazur, Katherine Paterson, Richard Russo and Melissa Sweet.

Massachusetts Center for the Book, along with its counterparts from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. protectorates and territories, will host a booth in the Festival’s States Pavilion, and will be joined by The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. “Each booth brings its region’s literary and library culture to the festival and all of us select one children’s book to feature which speaks to our heritage and identity,” explained MCB Executive Director Sharon Shaloo. “Family-friendly activities will guide young readers through the expo on a fun literary tour of the United States. We expect Massachusetts to be a popular stop, given our Great Read selection of *Growing Up Pedro*. We’re looking forward to spreading the word about this charming book and are grateful to the Red Sox for their generous donations of mementos for our visitors.”

*Growing Up Pedro* is a picture book about the life of Red Sox ace Pedro Martinez, written and illustrated by Winchester native (and lifelong Sox fan) Matt Tavares. "I feel lucky to have lived in Massachusetts when Pedro Martinez was on the Red Sox, and to have experienced in person the electricity of Fenway Park when Pedro was on the mound," Tavares stated. "It's an honor to have my book represent Massachusetts at the National Book Fest and exciting to share Pedro's inspiring story with a generation of kids who never got to see him play." Published in 2015 in English and Spanish by Somerville-based Candlewick Press, a highly respected independent publisher of books for children and young adults, the book has won numerous awards and is named to many prized literary lists.

The multi-generational appeal of the book, beyond the reach of Red Sox Nation and baseball fans, stems from Tavares' extensive research and sensitive storyline, as well as his remarkable gouache and watercolor paintings. While chronicling the major league career of a charismatic All Star pitcher, Cy Young winner and Hall of Famer, the book is just as much a compelling tale of two brothers growing up in the poverty of the Dominican Republic, learning to pitch by hurling rocks at mango trees, and dreaming of making it to the big leagues. The story follows the success of Ramon and Pedro, as well as their continued dedication to and support of their family, hometown, and the children of the Dominican Republic.

Katie Cunningham, Senior Editor at Candlewick, points out that this book uniquely encapsulates so much about the spirit of Massachusetts. "Determination, independence, and tenacity are some of the qualities for which our state is best known," Cunningham stated. "The book's subject, our hometown-by-way-of-the-Dominican-Republic hero Pedro Martinez, is a local living legend and author-illustrator Matt Tavares is a native son of the Commonwealth. Candlewick is so proud to have gained a spot on the Massachusetts Center for the Book's winning team!"

A public-private partnership charged with promoting cultural programming that advances lifelong literacy, Massachusetts Center for the Book is the Commonwealth's connection to the Library of Congress. MCB participates in several regional and national initiatives to advance the cause of reading, while developing and sponsoring literacy programs in every town and city in Massachusetts.

For more information about the National Book Fest, visit <https://www.loc.gov/bookfest/>. To learn more about Massachusetts Center for the Book, visit <http://massbook.org/>.