FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NCTE Announces Honorable Mention for the 2019 National Intellectual Freedom Award

Martha Hickson, of Washington, New Jersey, has been awarded an Honorable Mention for the NCTE National Intellectual Freedom Award. NCTE recognizes Hickson for her willingness to take a stand on behalf of youth’s rights to have access to and to choose books that show their lives in text, and for her tenacity in maintaining her stance in the midst of administrative pressures.

The award selection committee notes:

Administrators in a New Jersey high school district challenged the book Fun Home by Alison Bechdel. Ignoring the district policy for text reconsideration, the principal asked the librarian, Martha Hickson, to remove the book from the shelves of that high school’s library. She refused. She sought and received support for retaining the book from her union representative. Through direct outreach and networking, Ms. Hickson galvanized the attention and collective response of the broader community, including students, faculty, parents, and members of the New Jersey library community. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC), and American Librarians Association (ALA) also worked to support Ms. Hickson’s effort to retain the book in the library. Throughout February of this year the challenge continued, until the superintendent received a collaboratively written letter from NCAC that included signers such as American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Lambda Legal, and ALA. Finally, the principals of both high schools in the district put Fun Home back on the regularly accessible library shelves. The librarian, Martha Hickson, is receiving Honorable Mention because of her willingness to take a stand on behalf of youth’s rights to have access to and to choose books that show their lives in text, and for her tenacity in maintaining her stance in the midst of administrative pressures. Ms. Hickson proved herself a defender of the students’ rights to read this book.

The NCTE Intellectual Freedom Award honors individuals, groups, or institutions that merit recognition for advancing the cause of intellectual freedom. These awards are given in two categories: (1) a national Intellectual Freedom Award and (2) an NCTE affiliate-based award.

Martha Hickson will be announced as a recipient of an NCTE National Intellectual Freedom Award Honorable Mention during the awards session on Saturday, November 23, at the 2019 NCTE Annual Convention in Baltimore, Maryland.

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The National Council of Teachers of English (http://www.ncte.org), with 25,000 individual and institutional members worldwide, is the nation’s oldest literacy organization. With the expertise of its members, NCTE has led the nation in its most important decisions and trajectories around preK–16 literacy/writing/literature thinking. NCTE is dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education. Please follow us on Twitter and Facebook.