FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Cynthia Weill, EdD
Director, Center for Children's Literature
Bank Street College of Education
212-875-4652
cweill@bankstreet.edu

BANK STREET'S CHILDREN'S BOOK COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES ITS INAUGURAL YOUTH CHOICE AWARD

New York, NY—May 5, 2025—The Children's Book Committee (CBC), a division of the Center for Children's Literature at Bank Street College of Education, announced its inaugural Youth Choice Award honoring a book of outstanding literary merit on sensitive subjects written for a youth audience.

Chosen by the members of the CBC's Young Ambassadors Program—a group of young readers from toddlers through high school students who read and review books—this award is dedicated to the late children's book author and educator Robie H. Harris, GSE '70. Throughout her renowned career, Harris celebrated the challenges of childhood in her work and used the power of stories to help youth validate their feelings and emotions.

"The Youth Choice Award is a celebration of books that inspire young readers to see themselves and the world with more kindness and understanding," said 16-year-old Quade, Co-Chair of the Youth Choice Award Committee. "The award dedication is a tribute to Harris's legacy, honoring books that capture the spirit of exploration, psychological depth, and literary excellence that she championed throughout her life."

The 2025 inaugural Youth Choice Award has been presented to *Louder Than Hunger* by John Schu, a powerful book about middle school student Jake, who undergoes treatment for anorexia nervosa that manifests as a controlling "voice" in his head. The book features free-verse poetry that dramatically expresses his harrowing journey to health.

17-year-old Vimala, Co-Chair of the CBC's Youth Choice Award Committee, said, "*Louder Than Hunger* by John Schu was chosen for its honest portrayal of the struggles teens face, especially eating disorders and low self-esteem. Schu uniquely uses font size, capitalization, and bold text to broaden poetry's horizons for readers and connect them with all the emotions of adolescence, from the joy of listening to music to fears of not fitting in. In a society obsessed with perfection, *Louder Than Hunger* serves as an important reminder to accept all parts of yourself."

The selection process for the Youth Choice Award was led by the members of the Young Ambassadors Program, who collaborated to develop the criteria for selecting a shortlist from CBC-approved titles.

“The Young Ambassadors developed criteria that would recognize books that were inspiring and would resonate with their peers,” said Mary Anne Wolpert, an executive member of the CBC and mentor to the Young Ambassadors. “All of the ambassadors submitted comments for each title framed around the criteria and a final vote was cast. The final decision had full committee consensus and was unanimous.”

Quade added, “Kids are more likely to read the books they choose. The Youth Choice Award was created by dedicated Youth Readers and Reviewers who believe that books are an important part of building healthy communities and a connected world. It also serves as a rare, student-driven initiative to celebrate and promote literature that resonates deeply with young readers.”

Additional members of the committee include Alison (17 years old), Leah (16 years old), and Nikhil (17 years old).

The Young Reviewers program is comprised of children from toddlers through high school students around the United States who read and review books that are currently being considered by the CBC for its annual *Best Books of the Year* list. Started more than 20 years ago, the program supports the CBC’s longstanding mission to evaluate books for children, parents, librarians, and educators by focusing on how books can affect young readers. The Young Ambassadors arm of this group includes prolific teen reviewers with a longstanding commitment to literary analysis who advocate for developing a love of reading within their communities.

Youth interested in becoming a young reviewer can email youngreviewers@bankstreet.edu or visit bankstreet.edu/young-reviewers-program.

Reflecting on the award’s dedication, author Elizabeth Levy—Robie Harris’s first cousin and a member of the CBC—said, “Robie often credited her years as a graduate of Bank Street for her strong belief in children’s power to think for themselves. She would have been thrilled that, on their own, the students advocating for a Youth Choice Award asked that the award be dedicated to her. Their own words say it all: Robie Harris’s career placed youth agency at its core. Her books were written to help youth navigate complex topics and the emotions that come with them.”

Levy added that she, along with Robie’s sons, David and Ben Harris, and her grandchildren—all with ties to Bank Street—are so proud that the Young Ambassadors chose to honor her in this way.

About Robie H. Harris

Robie H. Harris graduated from Bank Street Graduate School of Education. She was the author of more than 30 books for children. Her best-known books, *It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, and Sexual Health* (1994) and *It's So Amazing: A Book About Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies, and Families (*1999), made her among the most censored authors in the United States.

About the Children's Book Committee

The Children's Book Committee strives to guide librarians, educators, parents, grandparents, and other interested adults to the best books for children published each year. The list includes more than 600 titles chosen by reviewers for literary quality and excellence of presentation, as well as the potential emotional impact of the books on young readers. Other criteria include credibility of characterization and plot, authenticity of time and place, age suitability, positive treatment of ethnic and religious differences, and the absence of stereotypes.

About the Center for Children's Literature

The mission of the Center for Children's Literature is to create, identify, and advocate for the highest quality literature for all children from infancy through adolescence. The center ensures that such literature is readily accessible to every child, and fosters in parents, educators, and policymakers a commitment to the principle that good literature is fundamental to literacy. The center provides workshops, guides, and content for learning and social-emotional/aesthetic development at all levels of childhood education. Learn more at bankstreet.edu/center-for-childrens-literature.

About Bank Street College of Education

Bank Street College of Education is a recognized leader in early childhood education, teacher and leader preparation, and the development of innovative practice in school systems across the country. For one hundred years, Bank Street's focus has been improving the education of children and their teachers by applying to the education process all available knowledge about learning and growth, and by connecting teaching and learning meaningfully to the outside world. Learn more about Bank Street's Children's Programs, Graduate School of Education, and the Bank Street Education Center at bankstreet.edu.