

## **ALA IFRT Intellectual Freedom Awards, 2003**

### **SIRS State and Regional Achievement Award**

The Bill of Rights Defense Committee (BORDC), Northampton, Mass., is the winner of the SIRS State and Regional Achievement Award presented by the American Library Association (ALA) Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT).

The award funded by SIRS Mandarin, Inc., consists of a citation and \$1,000. It recognizes innovative and effective intellectual freedom projects.

"This is such a wonderful honor for us," said Director Nancy Talanian. "We are especially pleased to be strengthening our relationship with librarians who are staunch supporters of the First Amendment." BORDC is being honored for helping to lead a national, grassroots movement to protect civil liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. This project has been unusually successful in recruiting activists across the country to work at the local level in coalition-building and promoting awareness of the negative impact on intellectual freedom and civil liberties posed by the USA Patriot Act and other similar pieces of federal legislation and regulation. One measure of their success is the number of towns, cities and counties across the country that they have assisted in passing local resolutions that protect the Bill of Rights and support rolling back those portions of recently-passed federal legislation that infringe on civil liberties.

### **John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award for Intellectual Freedom**

Gloria Pipkin and ReLeah Lent, former English teachers for the Bay County, Fla., schools, have been named the winners of the John Phillip Immroth Memorial Award for Intellectual Freedom for 2003, presented by the American Library Association (ALA) Intellectual Freedom Round Table (IFRT).

The Immroth Award honors intellectual freedom fighters in and outside the library profession who have demonstrated remarkable personal courage in resisting censorship. The award consists of \$500 and a citation. The Immroth Award Committee recognizes Pipkin and Lent for their ongoing public stand in defense of the freedom to read and intellectual freedom over two decades. The teachers were plaintiffs in two separate First Amendment suits against their school board, superintendent, and principal, in cases defending the right to read and the student press. Their stories are the subject of their book *At the Schoolhouse Gate: Lessons in Intellectual Freedom* (Heinemann, 2002).

"They set a standard of personal commitment, which serves as a model for all," said Chair, Pamela Bonnell-Mihalalis. "Amid death threats and continuing attacks on their personal and professional honor, their deep-seated commitment to the First Amendment did not waver. Their steadfast stance restored banned and restricted books and defended an outstanding school newspaper as a forum for student expression."

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