



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALABAMA HUMANITIES FOUNDATION TO HELP PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND SCHOOLS IN AREAS AFFECTED BY APRIL TORNADOES

Following the devastating tornadoes that ripped through our state in April, the Alabama Humanities Foundation (AHF) was awarded a \$30,000 emergency grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to launch Project Turn the Page, an initiative to help provide free books for damaged public libraries and schools.

AHF requested the emergency grant from NEH Chairman Jim Leach following the April 27 storms in order to help the affected communities. Public libraries suffered significant damage in Pratt City, White Hall, and Ragland, while schools were damaged in at least six different locations, including Jefferson County, Tuscaloosa County, Franklin County, Marion County and DeKalb County.

As part of Project Turn the Page, AHF plans to compile a list of books, including those focusing on Southern and Alabama history and fiction, as well as award-winning young adult titles. The libraries and schools will be invited to choose titles from the list that they wish to receive, up to a determined dollar amount. The books will be ordered by AHF and stored at the foundation's Birmingham offices until the libraries and schools are prepared to receive their requested volumes.

"Our building was completely demolished in the April 27 tornadoes," says Mary Schellhammer, librarian at Alberta Elementary in Tuscaloosa. Reading has always been very important at our school. We can't have enough books. The library is the center of the school and the school is sort of the hub of Alberta City. So it's important that we get our school back and an active library back."

A portion of the grant monies will expand AHF's new Literature and Health Care reading-and-discussion seminar at the VA Hospital in Tuscaloosa. Sessions will now include the impact of the tornado on the surrounding areas and how the hospital staff and patients are coping with the storms' aftermath. Another portion will help the town of Cordova participate in AHF's upcoming Museum on Main Street exhibit "Journey Stories." The Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibit can be viewed at the Bankhead House and Heritage Center in neighboring Jasper beginning June 25. Cordova was scheduled to be a part of Walker County's celebration of the exhibition until the storms came through in April.

AHF previously received an emergency grant from the NEH following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Those monies were used to purchase books for the Bayou La Batre Library, repair damages to exhibitions at the Museum of Mobile, aid the *USS Alabama* and send students from Alma Bryant High School to the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery.

If you would like to support Project Turn the Page, please call Paul Lawson at (205) 558-3992.

About the Alabama Humanities Foundation

The purpose of the Alabama Humanities Foundation is to create and foster opportunities to explore human values and meanings through the humanities. AHF is a nonprofit organization funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (of which AHF is the state affiliate), as well as by corporate and individual donors. AHF conducts its own statewide programs, such as the Road Scholars Speakers Bureau, SUPER teacher institutes and SUPER Emerging Scholars for students, and awards grants, on a competitive basis, to nonprofit organizations for humanities projects. For more information on AHF and its programs, please visit ahf.net or call (205) 558-3980.

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