



NEWS RELEASE

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**Award-Winning Author, Beth Finke, Speaks to Donors and Volunteers at
National Library Week Luncheon**

East Peoria - NPR commentator Beth Finke, an award-winning author, teacher and journalist, is the keynote speaker at the *Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center's Volunteer and Donor Recognition Luncheon* from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm on **Monday, April 14** at 600 High Point Lane, East Peoria.

Beth's essays air on the Morning Edition segment of National Public Radio. Her piece about the World Champion White Sox on Chicago Public Radio won awards in journalism excellence. These awards gave Beth some pretty nich-ey notoriety: she's the only blind woman in America to be honored for sports broadcasting.

Ms. Finke's new children's book -- "Hanni and Beth: Safe & Sound"— recently received a stellar review in *School Library Journal*, as well as the 2007 Henry Bergh Book Award which recognizes outstanding children's books that promote kindness to animals -- given by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and American Library Association.

Beth's experience and candor have made her a popular speaker at conferences and events across the country. Beth and Hanni, her Seeing Eye dog, regularly make appearances in suburban Chicago schools, libraries, and book stores. Her heartfelt, funny, and thoughtful talks leave audiences smiling and knowing a lot more about adaptability and resourcefulness.

Hanni and Beth Safe and Sound – which is narrated in the “voice” of Seeing Eye Dog, Hanni -- will be available for purchasing and signing. As Beth says, “Typically, 90% of people’s questions are about my relationship with Hanni; while 10% are about my blindness.”

“We know that Beth will be an inspiration to the volunteers and donors who support Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center’s mission of providing books on tape to clients with blindness or low-vision,” says Kitty Pope, Executive Director of Alliance Library System, the agency that administers the Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center.

“The Talking Book Program relies heavily upon donations and volunteers from the Telephone Pioneers and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Volunteers are unpaid --- not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless,” says Pope.

The Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center is part of a state and national network of libraries serving the print-disabled. **Anyone who is not comfortable reading regular size print is eligible to receive free reading material**, in recorded, downloadable, or Braille format -- from the Talking Book program. Applications are available at local libraries or on the Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center’s website: www.mitbc.org.

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White and the Illinois State Library administer the program in Illinois. The Illinois network consists of the regional library in Springfield and four talking book centers in East Peoria, Chicago, Geneva and Carterville.

Websites:

Mid-Illinois Talking Book Center: <http://www.mitbc.org>

Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service: www.ilbph.org

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS): The Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/nls/>

Interview Opportunities:

Beth Finke (bethfinke.com) is available for interviews.

Facts:

More than 150,000 Illinois citizens are eligible for the talking book program, many of them are disabled veterans.

There are 1 million people with blindness in the US. The blind population is predicted to double in the next 25 years.

There are 2.5 million people with low-vision in the US. This number grows as the population ages.

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