

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Lou Diamond Phillips Joins the Screen Actors Guild Foundation in  
A National Literacy Campaign as Spokesperson for BookPALS**

Los Angeles, CA. (April 20, 2004) The Screen Actors Guild Foundation, the charitable, educational and humanitarian arm of the Screen Actors Guild, announces the appointment of Lou Diamond Phillips as the new spokesperson for its national literacy program, BookPALS (Performing Artists for Literacy in Schools).

One of the fastest growing literacy programs in the country, BookPALS is an all-volunteer program with more than 3000 dedicated readers in 15 branches nationwide. Volunteers promote the joys of reading to more than 100,000 preschool to fifth grade students, in groups both large and small, in more than 2000 schools each week. This progressive program also extends its literacy message directly into schools and homes via its new media initiative, *Storyline Online* ( HYPERLINK "<http://www.bookpals.net/storyline>" [www.bookpals.net/storyline](http://www.bookpals.net/storyline)) featuring online streaming of celebrity-read stories complete with interactive lessons and activity guides.

“Promoting a love of reading in pre and elementary school is one of the most important things a teacher or parent can do for their children. Lou’s high-profile will certainly inspire more children to read. Literate children grow up with higher self-esteem, which better enables them to live happy, productive lives. We’re thrilled to welcome Lou as our national spokesman,” comments SAG Foundation’s Executive Director Marcia Smith.

As spokesperson, Phillips will represent BookPALS in all promotional campaigns and speak on a wide variety of literacy-related topics throughout the U.S. He will also represent the Foundation and its programs in conferences, workshops, and special events. Phillips replaces Andre Braugher, who served as spokesperson since 2002.

The father of three girls, Phillips reinforces the importance of reading via first hand experience. “Children’s curiosity is boundless and reading feeds that appetite for learning and creativity. Having read to my three girls, I’m convinced that reading to them early and often has helped make them better students and better people. I’d like to pass those joys on to as many kids as possible.”

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Phillips first came to the public's attention when he starred as Ritchie Valens in *La Bamba* (1987). The following year he garnered critical acclaim for his performance in *Stand and Deliver* by winning the Independent Spirit Award for Best Supporting Actor and receiving a Best Supporting Actor Golden Globe nomination. He has also starred in a wide variety of film roles including *Courage Under Fire* (1996) and *Supernova* (1998). Phillips' talents also include live theater, where he starred as the King of Siam in the Broadway musical *The King and I* and earned a Tony nomination for Best Actor. Prolific behind the camera as well, Phillips directed the feature film *Sioux City* (1994) and served as associate producer on *Ambition* (1991). He will next be seen in *Gone But Not Forgotten*, a Hallmark miniseries co-starring Brooke Shields.

Ellen Nathan, National Director of BookPALS, states, "The role of the national spokesperson is invaluable to us. The Screen Actors Guild Foundation wants to send a clear message through our efforts: Our children and their education matter! As a longtime literacy advocate, Lou is the ideal person to convey that message." Nathan works with the BookPALS coordinators and oversees the training of the volunteers in major cities.

#### **About SAG Foundation**

Since its inception in 1993, the Screen Actors Guild Foundation ( [HYPERLINK "http://www.sagfoundation.org"](http://www.sagfoundation.org) [www.sagfoundation.org](http://www.sagfoundation.org)) has provided financial, health and education assistance to SAG's 120,000 members. It has reached the community at large with its nationally recognized BookPALS program for which SAG members lend their reading talents to children in schools and has earned enormous success and many awards for providing literacy opportunities to millions of children. Storyline Online is a national literacy program that builds on the BookPALS program. Sponsored by Verizon, Storyline Online streams video programs on-line featuring celebrities reading children's books aloud and offers books of various themes by award winning authors.

Artwork is available upon request.

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