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BESTSELLING AUTHOR JESS WALTER AND PHILANTHROPIST MARTHA KONGSGAARD TO RECEIVE HUMANITIES WASHINGTON AWARDS

SEATTLE— This fall, Humanities Washington will honor *New York Times*-bestselling author Jess Walter of Spokane and philanthropist Martha Kongsgaard of Seattle with its 2017 Humanities Washington Awards. The awards recognize outstanding achievement in the public humanities in two categories: “Philanthropy and Leadership” and “Scholarship and Service.” Kongsgaard will receive the award for Philanthropy and Leadership at the Seattle Bedtime Stories fundraising gala on October 6, and Walter will be honored with the award for Scholarship and Service at the Bedtime Stories fundraiser in Spokane on October 27.

These awards are presented annually to two individuals or organizations whose time and talents enlarge the meaning of the humanities in our lives and whose work reflects the spirit and programs of Humanities Washington. Past awardees have included National Book Award winner Charles Johnson, Washington State Poet Laureate Tod Marshall, and former congressman Norm Dicks. The awards are given in honor of Heather and Herb Frank of Yakima who, throughout their lives, were dedicated supporters of the humanities and cultural efforts.

Originally a journalist, Jess Walter is the author of eight books, most recently *Beautiful Ruins*, and was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2006. Walter’s stories have appeared in *Harper’s*, *Esquire*, *McSweeney’s*, and *Best American Short Stories*, among other publications. As part of his commitment to nurturing creativity in Spokane, he co-founded Spark Central, a community arts and literacy center aimed at underserved youth. He’s been an active participant in GetLit! and was inducted into Spokane’s Citizen

Hall of Fame in 2016 for Arts and Letters (an award given by the Spokane Public Library). Walter was emcee of Humanities Washington's first Bedtime Stories fundraiser in Spokane, served on the Humanities Washington Award selection committee in 2009, and is a former member of Humanities Washington's board of trustees. He has remained actively involved in Bedtime Stories, contributing an original short story in four of the past five events.

Philanthropist Martha Kongsgaard, co-founder of the Kongsgaard-Goldman Foundation, is an active and driven volunteer for cultural and environmental causes throughout the Pacific Northwest. She lent her talents and influence to the inaugural Bedtime Stories event in Seattle 19 years ago, served as the event's honorary chair in 2012, and has steadfastly supported the organization through changes in the cultural and economic landscape.

Kongsgaard is immediate past chair of the Puget Sound Partnership Leadership Council, is past president of Philanthropy Northwest, and past chair of the Washington Women's Foundation. Other community activities have included participation on the boards of Earthjustice, the Bullitt Foundation, IslandWood, The Ruckelshaus Center, Friends of the Waterfront, The Future of the Law Institute, Friends of the Methow, UW's College of the Environment and Center for Human Rights, and The Puget Sound Institute. She has been honored with the Nancy Nordhoff Civic Leadership Award by City Club, Woman of the Year Award by Seattle University School of Law, the Environmental Hero Award by the Washington Environmental Council, to name just a few.

"Our two honorees exemplify the most positive aspects of the humanities," said Julie Ziegler, executive director of Humanities Washington. "Jess is one of our state's most popular authors and Martha is deeply involved in so many charitable causes, yet each works tirelessly to ensure programs exist to help communities think critically, express openness to a variety of perspectives, and nurture creativity. Seattle, Spokane, and Washington State are more vibrant and welcoming places because of their efforts."

ABOUT HUMANITIES WASHINGTON

Humanities Washington sparks conversation and critical thinking using story as a catalyst, nurturing thoughtful and engaged communities across our state. For more about Humanities Washington, visit humanities.org.

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