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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Encourage Compassion, Care During the American Humane's "Be Kind to Animals" Week**

**Mt. Pleasant, S.C.** (April 23, 2007) – The American Humane Association's 93<sup>rd</sup> annual "Be Kind to Animals" Week begins Sunday, May 6 and offers a great opportunity to remind people about the important role animals play in our lives.

The American Humane Association has been hosting this week since 1915 to celebrate the remarkable bond between humans and animals, and children's illustrator Emanuel Schongut's picture books, "*Turtles In My Sandbox*" and "*Christmas Eve Blizzard*," are one way to promote compassion towards animals among children and to teach them how to care for wildlife.

Both of the California illustrator's picture books encourage kindness, teach children and adults how to care for animals—specifically terrapin turtles and cardinals—and have been a finalist for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' Henry Bergh Book Award. "*Blizzard*" was nominated for the 2005 award and "*Sandbox*" is under consideration for the 2006 award, which will be announced at the American Library Association's (ALA) annual conference in June.

"*Turtles In My Sandbox*" is written by award-winning Maryland author Jennifer Keats Curtis and is based on a popular terrapin head start program that gives Maryland students the opportunity to participate as experts gather, hatch and release terrapin eggs each summer. The picture book follows a young girl named Maggie as she becomes a "turtle sitter," raises the baby turtles and then, with the help of scientists, releases the "head started" turtles into the bay.

The Terrapin Institute, the Department of Biological Services at Ohio University and the Department of Biology at the University of Florida have vetted "Sandbox" for scientific accuracy and Curtis donates a portion of her royalties to the Terrapin Institute. Schongut adds, "Although the heroine is a young girl, I think that Jennifer wrote the story in a way that makes every child who reads the book feel included regardless of race or sex, and that's part of what makes our book unique—and what makes it so appropriate for 'Be Kind to Animals' Week."

"*Christmas Eve Blizzard*" is written by Connecticut author Andrea Vlahakis and tells the story of how a boy, Nicholas, and his grandfather push their Christmas traditions aside to rescue a cardinal that becomes trapped during a blizzard. The bird quickly responds to their kindness, regains its strength and flies away—only to unexpectedly reward Nicholas, his grandfather and their entire village with a lifetime of Christmas cheer. "*Blizzard*" has been vetted for scientific accuracy by the Audubon Venter at Beidler Forest in South Carolina and was selected as a New York Library Association Book of the Season.

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Both books are published by Sylvan Dell Publishing and are part of the Accelerated Reader program. Like all Sylvan Dell books, "**Sandbox**" and "**Blizzard**" contain a "For Creative Minds" educational section. "**Sandbox**'s" section includes terrapin fun facts about habitat, adaptations, food and nesting. "**Blizzard**'s" section includes instructions to create a bird-friendly backyard, bird feeder crafts, a "Cardinal Numbers" math game and information on what to do if you find an injured bird.

Schongut is a prolific, multi-faceted freelance illustrator who has designed not only children's books but also book covers, textbooks, editorial art, posters and advertising. Some of his numerous clients include Public Television, *New York Magazine* and *New York Times Sunday magazine*. In addition, Schongut has taught reportorial art and figure drawing at New York's Pratt Institute. He now illustrates and teaches in the San Francisco Bay area.

Sylvan Dell Publishing is on a mission to create picture books that excite children's imaginations, are artistically spectacular and have educational value. Readers can ask for "**Turtles In My Sandbox**," "**Christmas Eve Blizzard**" and other Sylvan Dell titles at their favorite local or online bookstore. For more information, please visit [www.SylvanDellPublishing.com](http://www.SylvanDellPublishing.com) or call Katherine Miller at (877) 958-2600. Anyone interested in learning more about the American Humane Association's "Be Kind to Animals" Week should visit the organization's website, [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org).

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