



Action Read Presents PEN Canada at our International Literacy Day Celebration, Thursday September 8, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
ATTENTION COMMUNITY EDITORS:

Guelph, ON, Canada. August 25, 2016 – International Literacy Day, September 8th, is a day to recognize and celebrate literacy as a foundation for lifelong learning, as well as an essential ingredient to transform lives. At Action Read, we see first-hand the immense power of literacy to improve lives through such things as better employment and health, greater civic involvement and improved ability to communicate with others.

To mark this important occasion, Action Read invites you to attend our International Literacy Day celebration on **Thursday September 8th 2016, from 7-9 pm, at Studio 404, located at 404 York Road in Guelph**. This **FREE** event will raise awareness of our work in the community, while building excitement and greater understanding of critical literacy-related issues facing the world today. It is open to anyone interested in literacy, social justice and freedom of expression.

Come be inspired through storytelling and community building. Above all, we couldn't agree more with our guests of honour, PEN Canada, when they state "We believe in the power of stories to explore, inform, challenge, inspire, and above all, reveal the inherent dignity of the human person and the complex reality of our experience"¹. The evening will begin with **Guelph educator Michael Noonan** briefly exploring the impact Action Read's work has had in our community for almost 30 years. **Learner Charles Laurie Johnson** will share his powerful story about how literacy transformed his life from one of substance abuse and prison, to one of education and giving back to the community. **Poet and University of Guelph Philosophy Professor Dr. Karen Houle** will explore issues affecting freedom of speech in Canada today. Dr. Houle will then introduce our guests of honour from PEN Canada. We are delighted to present **PEN Canada's Brendan de Caires**, in conversation with a **writer in exile**. The powerful testimony of this writer - who has faced pervasive oppression and violence in his homeland - will leave no shadow of doubt as to the importance of literacy as a means for freedom of expression.

Action Read is eternally grateful for the support of the following event sponsors; Akal Vision, The Bookshelf, Janus Books, Nancy Bailey, Print Solutions, and Studio 404. We also wish to thank our speakers and volunteers; Joanne Poluch, Karen Houle, Laurie Johnson, Michael Noonan and PEN Canada, as well as others.

PEN Canada (<http://pencanada.ca/>) is a nonpartisan organization of writers that works with others to defend freedom of expression as a basic human right, at home and abroad. PEN Canada promotes literature, fights censorship, helps free persecuted writers from prison, and assists writers living in exile in Canada.

Action Read Community Literacy Centre (www.actionread.com) is a Guelph-based charitable, volunteer-driven organization dedicated to improving the lives of adults and families through literacy and numeracy. Our education programs are free and accessible. We are funded by Employment Ontario, the United Way of Guelph, Wellington and Dufferin, "Friends of Action Read" private donors, and others.



We look forward to seeing you on September 8th, 7 pm at Studio 404, 404 York Road in Guelph! Doors open at 6 pm. This is a licensed event.

The venue is accessible and has free parking. However, please allow yourself extra time due to the construction on York Road.

For more information on this event, call Mira Clarke at 519-836-2759, visit our website, or drop by our centre at 2 Quebec St, Suite 220 in downtown Guelph.

¹ PEN Canada Annual Report 2015-2016