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REBECCA S. MITCHELL
DIRECTOR

"Growing public libraries across Alabama"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 29, 2008

Contact: Crystal Bonvillian
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Helena librarian plugs Homework Alabama for TV news

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Victoria Ashford, right, library director for the Jane B. Holmes Public Library in Helena, explains the benefits of Homework Alabama to Sarah Verser of Fox6 in Birmingham on Wednesday. Verser was on hand for a demonstration of the online tutoring program, which has been expanded to include students of all ages.

Matthew Smith of Helena loves computers.

Because of that fact, the 6-year-old barely seemed to notice he was learning on Wednesday as he tried out Homework Alabama for the first time.

Smith and his family were part of a demonstration of the online tutoring program held at the Jane B. Holmes Public Library in Helena. On hand for the demonstration were Helena mayor Charles "Sonny" Penhale, state Rep. Cam Ward,

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R-Alabaster and State Librarian Rebecca Mitchell.

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Also on hand was Sarah Verser of Fox6 in Birmingham, who taped a segment about the program for the station.

Library director Victoria Ashford, with help from Mitchell and Krissie Smith, a representative of program provider Tutor.com, explained the ins and outs of the program.

Homework Alabama began as a pilot program for the Harrison Regional Library System, which the Helena library is part of, before becoming a statewide initiative in 2005. Since expanding statewide, the program's tutors have had more than 200,000 sessions with Alabama students.

On Aug. 1, Homework Alabama expanded its services to include students of all ages, including adult learners. Its Writing Center has also expanded its services to include more comprehensive help on writing assignments, resumes and more.

Homework Alabama is free of charge to all Alabama citizens. Annual funding for the \$500,000 program comes through money appropriated by the Alabama Legislature and federal funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, through its Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant



Matthew Smith, 6, does some schoolwork during a demonstration of Homework Alabama Wednesday at the Jane B. Holmes Public Library in Helena. Matthew and his siblings are homeschooled by their mother, who is grateful for the free online tutoring program.

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It is available in all of Alabama's public libraries and can also be accessed from home at www.homeworkalabama.org.

Tutors are available from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. every Sunday through Thursday. Subjects include English, math, science and social studies.

Tutors are highly educated and screened carefully for students' safety. Sessions last approximately 20 minutes and, although students can log in as many times as necessary, they cannot ask for a specific tutor.

For more information or additional photos, contact Crystal Bonvillian at 334-213-3966 or by e-mail at crystal.bonvillian@apls.alabama.gov.

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