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For Immediate Release

Governors State University to host author Joe Benevento

University Park, September 23, 2005 - Novelist and professor Joe Benevento will share selections of his new book, *The Odd Squad*, on Tuesday, September 27th at 5 p.m. in Engbretson Hall at Governors State University. There is no charge to attend the presentation, which is open to the public. The University is located at One University Parkway in University Park, Illinois.

Narrated by the characters themselves, *The Odd Squad* is a story of the streets in a working-class, post "white-flight" neighborhood in Queens in the early '70's. On a block where muggings, drug deals, and racial conflicts are commonplace, three teens, Willie King, Frankie Nero, and Luis Flores, "one black, one white, one Puerto Rican," coexist. They are labeled "The Odd Squad," for being best friends in spite of powerful neighborhood pressures to stick with "their own kind."

Reflecting the street language, music, dance, dress, and sub-cultures of the times, *The Odd Squad* tells a story of friendship challenged by peer pressure, prejudice, and the allure of sex and drugs. It also tells a story of interracial romance between Frankie and Luis's sister Laura, whose chances for happiness are challenged by a neighborhood perhaps more ready to explode from hate than to be redeemed by love.

"One could classify Joe Benevento's new novel with other coming-of-age works such as the *Outsiders*," said Dr. Todd Rohman, English Professor at Governors State University. "What I find unique about *The Odd Squad* is the way it addresses some of our culture's thorniest issues of race, difference, and "Otherness" with humanity and humor. The work is rewarding to any student of literature, but could have great appeal in high school English courses."

Joe Benevento has published two books of poetry, *Holding On* and *Willing to Believe*, and the novel *Plumbing in Harlem*. His poems, stories and essays have appeared in a few hundred places, including *Poets & Writers* and *Bilingual Review*. He is a Professor of English at Truman State University.

Dr. Benevento's visit is sponsored by the Graduate Council's Intellectual Life Subcommittee and the GSU Center for Quality. For additional information, contact university professor Todd Rohman at 708-534-4023.