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D.C. PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION FINDS UNIQUE WAY TO DISTRIBUTE GRANT FUNDING

Fourteen Proposals To Share Nearly \$75,000

(Washington, DC) – In an effort to spur out-of-the-box thinking about where to direct more than \$75,000 within the District of Columbia Library system, the Library’s Foundation Board decided to do something innovative: create a grant proposal process that produced fourteen winning entries. The catch was that entries had to be submitted by Library employees and be for projects specifically geared toward improving the system’s ability to outreach to the public or provide better programs and services.



While the Foundation expected it would receive some proposals, its members were admittedly delighted with the positive response from Library staff and overflowing in-basket. Thirty proposals ranging from \$421 to \$7,500, the maximum grant request allowed, were submitted. Finally, the Foundation had found a way to ensure the funds it is chartered to provide to the Library were being put to the absolute best use. A surprising, yet unanticipated, result was also

that the proposal contest helped to invigorate the staff's energy and improve morale in a system that has been chronically under-funded for decades.

"The challenge for the Foundation Board in deciding how to give \$75,000 to library projects was the depth and breadth of need within the system," said Nancy Register, President. "Decades of declining funding have seriously affected our services to DC residents. As a result, the role the Foundation plays in raising and granting funds to the Library is more critical than ever. Asking library staff to determine the areas of greatest need just made good sense."

The nine-member Library Foundation Board voted on the grants Thursday, November 13. Today the winning applicants were awarded their grants in a special ceremony hosted by the Board and the interim library director at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library. The winning proposals were:

- Adult Literacy Resource Center – \$5,100 for summer ESL conversation group
- Audiovisual Division – \$3,500 for updated collections for hard-of-hearing customers
- Books Plus, The Library Store – \$7,500 for point-of-sale computer
- Cleveland Park Neighborhood Library – \$7,500 for books and resources for parents and teachers
- Children's and Young Adult Collections – \$7,500 to replace collections in the area of science projects
- Community Youth Services – \$7,500 to expand the DC Reads to Babies Newborn Project
- Georgetown Neighborhood Library – \$1,173.26 for fund a creative writing contest for children and young adults
- Music and Recreation Division – \$6,400 for additional networked computers
- Popular Library Division – \$7,500 for "Exploring Latino Authors: Novelas Contemporáneas" – a public program to be held in 2004
- Popular Library Division – \$1,000 for "Edward P. Jones: A Reading"
- Sociology, Education and Government Division – \$7,500 partial funding for the purchase of a comprehensive encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences

- Takoma Park Neighborhood Library – \$421 for book baskets for the book loan program serving local elementary schools
- Technology Division – \$7,500 for basic reference literature and on-line resources supporting careers in allied health
- Washingtoniana Division – \$2,400 for a research-dedicated computer with CD-burner

“Fresh ideas are what truly spurs innovation, and I must commend the Library Foundation Board for thinking of a way to distribute their funds throughout our system in such a stimulating way,” said Richard L. Jackson, interim library director. “The excitement that was generated among librarians and staff, knowing that they had a chance to breathe life into their ideas, was palpable and I think will ultimately end up benefiting the public.”

While \$72,494.26 went toward the fourteen winning grants, \$75,000 was allotted for the competition. The Board decided to use the remaining funds to support grant-writing workshops for interested Library staff. The goal will be to aid staff members who wish to submit future proposals to the Library Foundation, or who will submit grant applications to non-affiliated sources.

