



# National Medal for Museum and Library Service



INSTITUTE of  
**Museum and Library**  
SERVICES

2023 PROGRAM



**The IMLS National Medal is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums,** a tribute to how they are making a difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities around the country.

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IMLS will provide an audio recording of this publication upon request. Special thanks to the entire staff at the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

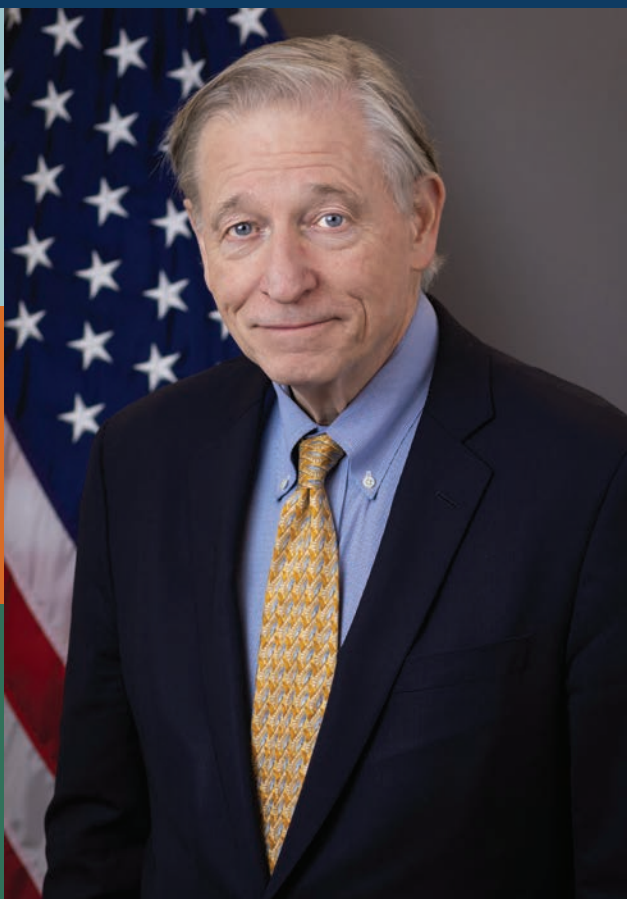
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# From the IMLS Director



Community has been a watch word for libraries and museums for decades, and a focus of the National Medals program and IMLS grants for much longer than my tenure here at the IMLS. We have been “coming out” of the pandemic interminably, it seems, and are still (re-)learning what it means to be a community and to be people in community now.

Our winners for 2023 all view their patrons, visitors, members as people, not just as numbers, statistics, or faceless in a crowd. They have devoted time, energy, and money to creating cultures of listening, of embeddedness, of seeing the people that surround and enter their institutions as individuals with a gamut of ever-changing, sometimes overlapping needs that our winners can address.

The eight 2023 winners of the National Medals for Museum and Library Service see the needs of individual people from children facing the isolating and fear-inducing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic to people experiencing homelessness who are in need of dignity-restoring care from immediate, direct services to long-term, permanent housing. They see parents learning about the value of reading to their newborns even in the NICU and laying the groundwork for literacy, planting seeds for a lifetime. For some, engagement and understanding arrives by way of inspiring a career in environmental stewardship, sparking passionate and intellectual desire to change one small corner of the world—for others, it lies

in a fresh start after incarceration. Seeing and celebrating new and vibrant art means not only seeing and celebrating the work of the artists, but the people, the lives, the experiences, the communities they depict, enriching everyone who delights in it. These museums and libraries also excel at knowing when they cannot go it alone, but can exponentially increase who and how they help through partnerships, connecting people of all ages and abilities with other service providers and agencies to spread the joy of learning and make crucial differences in their lives.

On behalf of the IMLS staff and board, I thank you all for the work you do every day. I am honored to be able to call you the proud winners of our 2023 National Medals for Museum and Library Services.

*Crosby Kemper*

CROSBY KEMPER  
DIRECTOR  
INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES



# Center of Science and Industry (COSI)

Columbus, Ohio

ADDRESS: 333 W. BROAD ST., COLUMBUS, OH 43215

PHONE: 614-228-2674

WEB: [HTTPS://COSI.ORG/](https://cosi.org/)

PRESIDENT & CEO: FREDERIC BERTLEY, PHD



COSI (the Center of Science and Industry) is dedicated to making science accessible for all. The Columbus, Ohio, museum wants people to understand that science is everywhere and for everyone—not just scientists. In addition to its onsite physical museum space, COSI is helping more people access curated science experiences off-site in their communities, locally and globally, as well as online with their digital ecosystem.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

In 2022, COSI and several partners launched “THE PLATFORM,” a comprehensive, multi-year STEM program for traditionally underrepresented high school students. Students receive STEM education and mentorship from leading experts in the field, as well as opportunities for hands-on projects, scholarships, and internships. Through this program and many others, COSI strives to inspire the next generation—especially those from underserved backgrounds—to pursue careers in STEM that will make a difference, whether it’s elevating people out of poverty, saving the lives of loved ones, or making the planet better.

## EXHIBITING THAT SCIENCE IS FOR ALL

With a building the size of three football fields, COSI has something for everyone, from the little kidspace® to the COSI After Dark evening events for adults. COSI offers visitors the chance to interact with science in a tangible way, whether participating in an electrostatic generator demonstration or “traveling” through the stars in Ohio’s largest planetarium. Through each exhibit, COSI seeks to engage and excite people who think science is not for them. COSI’s Color of Science program, in particular, engages the public with stories of remarkable STEM professionals, including women; people of African American, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian Pacific, and Native American heritages; members of the LGBTQ+ community; and people with disabilities.





## FROM PLACE-BASED TO SPACE-BASED

In addition to its physical space, COSI offers experiences that people all over the world can access. These include science immersion experiences with hands-on kit distributions in underserved communities; the Emmy Award-winning television show “QED with Dr. B,” a partnership with PBS; “Dr. B in 3,” an Emmy Award-winning animated series produced entirely in-house; and virtual experiences through the COSI Connects platform. In addition, with the collaboration of 250 partners, COSI hosts the four-day COSI Science Festival, which has grown from the largest science event in Ohio to one of the largest science events in the country.

## PARTNERING FOR IMPACT

In 2016, COSI became the first and only satellite site of New York City’s American Museum of Natural History (AMNH)—the largest natural history museum in the world. The unprecedented partnership resulted in the American Museum of Natural History Dinosaur Gallery, one of COSI’s most popular exhibits. The permanent gallery was one of the first in the world to showcase the evolution and migration from dinosaurs to the avian species, proving that technically, dinosaurs never went extinct. Also through this partnership, COSI hosts an exhibition gallery featuring rotating AMNH curated special exhibitions.

*“Museums can be cultural anchors that spread far beyond their hallowed halls and being bricks-and-mortar and morph into content sharers, and cultural experience providers wherever you live, learn and lounge—whether you’re in the building or not. That excites me generally for the field and specifically for COSI because we have embraced that philosophy—cultural elevation inside our building and outside of our walls is in our DNA.”*

**— Dr. Frederic Bertley, President & CEO**



# Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum

Buffalo, Wyoming

ADDRESS: 100 FORT ST., BUFFALO, WY 82834

PHONE: 307-684-9331

WEB: [HTTPS://JIMGATCHELL.COM/](https://jimgatchell.com/)

DIRECTOR: SYLVIA BRUNER



The Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum celebrates the community connections made by Theodore James “Jim” Gatchell, who opened the first drugstore in Johnson County, Wyoming, in the spring of 1900. Today, the museum embodies that same sense of connection with the people, places, and past of this rural county. More than just preserving history, the museum stands as a testament to friendship in a time where violence was the norm.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

One of the museum’s most popular exhibits highlights the 1892 Johnson County Cattle War, which some visitors have heard of thanks to several (largely inaccurate) TV and movie portrayals. Visitors are often shocked when they learn the true events that took place between the area’s wealthy cattle barons and the small homesteaders who moved out West to make better lives for their families. Many newspapers at the time were owned by cattle barons, who painted the homesteaders—and Buffalo in general—as villainous cattle rustlers. The exhibit sets the record straight and reminds visitors of the importance of truth and accuracy in reporting.

## EVERYBODY’S HISTORY MATTERS

Gatchell met many people through his pharmacy, from cowboys to lawmen, settlers, cattle barons, and famous Army scouts. Having grown up on a Lakota reservation, Gatchell was also a trusted friend of the region’s Native Americans. The many gifts Gatchell received from his friends inspired the founding of the museum following the pharmacist’s death in 1954. The initial collection included roughly 1,100 artifacts; today, that number is closer to 25,000–30,000 thanks to items donated by Johnson County residents. Items range from firearms to medicine bags, clothing, artwork, and a bugle believed to have come from the Fetterman Fight, a battle in the 1860s between the U.S. Cavalry and Sioux Tribe at the now-abandoned Bozeman Trail.







## HONORING A LEGACY OF FRIENDSHIP AND RESPECT

The museum has begun the process of redesigning its Native American gallery to ensure its content is controlled by the region's native tribes. The museum is in the beginning stages of this work, as museum leadership wants to first ensure compensation for tribal representatives who offer their time and knowledge. The majority of items in the museum's Native American gallery were gifts from Weasel Bear, a Northern Cheyenne warrior and one of Gatchell's closest friends. In a modern reflection of this relationship, Montana's Northern Cheyenne Tribe asked the museum to safeguard a collection of items that had been looted by a U.S. Army brigadier general during a battle in the 1870s, then repatriated to the tribe by the general's great-granddaughter a century later.

## A STAPLE OF THE COMMUNITY

Similar to Gatchell's pharmacy, the museum is a staple of the community, bringing together visitors and locals from the 4,500-person city of Buffalo. The museum offers educational programs conducted in partnership with area school districts and homeschool groups from daycare through high school. To support its educational programming and hands-on activities, the museum works with outdoor recreational planners from local field offices of the Wyoming State Forestry Division, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and the Bureau of Land Management.



*"The modern purpose of the museum still very directly relates to who Jim Gatchell was as a person. By everybody's accounts, he was an individual who valued people across the board regardless of their race, creed, or gender. He seemed like a genuine, inclusive, welcoming kind of person who valued his fellow human and wanted to preserve history for everybody."*

*— Sylvia Bruner, Director*



# Kuskokwim Consortium Library

Bethel, Alaska

ADDRESS: 420 STATE HIGHWAY, BETHEL, AK 99559

PHONE: 907-453-4516

WEB: WWW.UAF.EDU/BETHELLIBRARY

LIBRARY DIRECTOR: THERESA QUINER



When living in a remote area, the role of a library can be significant. The Kuskokwim Consortium Library—which plays dual roles as academic library for the University of Alaska, Fairbanks Kuskokwim campus, and a public library—is truly a connector of dots. It helps its community—which is only reachable by air, not road—access resources that allow them to embrace their environment; explore their predominantly Yup'ik culture; and participate in a modern, digitally driven world.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

For those in the Bethel area, wilderness is on their back doorstep; KCL organizes its programming to lean into that reality. Area industry draws in newcomers who need a guide to living and thriving in their beautiful but unfamiliar new home, where animals and the elements must be understood and managed. KCL operates a kayaking program in the summer so that residents can enjoy their natural surroundings, and partners with community organizations to teach wilderness survival. The library boasts a large collection of plant books, as harvesting plants and using them for food and medicine is a big thing here; in June, they hosted a “tundra walk” to educate residents about fiddleheads ferns—the first plant you can eat in the spring.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

With its severe climate (winter lasts October through May most years), Bethel needed programs and services that would keep people experiencing homelessness housed, fed, and warm. KCL has long worked with community partners to address not only the larger homelessness issue but also the tangential ones that come with housing instability. They hold Project Homeless Connect events two to three times a year in collaboration with the Housing and Homelessness Coalition to provide one place where people who need a range of services can get them. Participants can come to get meals, giveaway items such as clothing, feminine products, medical services—including substance abuse support—even haircuts. Through these coordinated events, they are also able to collect survey data about the scope of homelessness in the area and tie it to requests for federal funding. In 2024, Bethel will have 24 apartments known as Winter House to help shelter its homeless population.





## A BIG FOOTPRINT

Although KCL is smaller than most in nearly every way—staff, space, budget—they collaborate to have a big footprint and provide something for everyone. Staff incorporate the community as leaders of what they teach and offer in order to be a part of community wide efforts to connect with the thriving Yup'ik culture in the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta. This part of Alaska is home to the Yup'ik peoples: the Yup'ik language is being taught in Bethel area schools and there is a community-wide commitment to revitalize Yup'ik culture. The library's Alaskana Collection features a guide covering Yup'ik language materials, an extensive collection of Yup'ik books for all ages, and many memoirs and local history materials such as historical newspapers. As part of an 8-hour Indigenous Peoples' Day event this year, residents contributed potluck dishes of their native foods, elders conducted a talking circle to share their wisdom and experience, and others celebrated their Yup'ik cultural traditions through dancing.

*"My greatest reward is in seeing people come to the library for a program or a resource they need and leave satisfied. Our community uses us to overcome a barrier of one type or another, and I'm gratified that they know they can rely on us."*

**– Theresa Quiner, Library Director**



# LA County Library

Los Angeles, California

ADDRESS: MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

PHONE: MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

WEB: [HTTPS://LACOUNTYLIBRARY.ORG/](https://lacountylibrary.org/)

LIBRARY DIRECTOR: SKYE PATRICK



LA County Library serves over 3.4 million residents through its 86 locations. As the second-largest library system in the U.S. by location, it can be easy for programs to get lost in the shuffle. But LA County Library staff always finds a way to make this library system's impactful work stand out while reinforcing its role in the community as a place that can support the whole person.

## CONNECTING TO THE COMMUNITY

LA County Library aims to break down barriers and increase access for all. One of the shining examples of this effort is My Brother's Keeper, a localized version stemming from former President Obama's initiative that works toward improving outcomes for boys and young people of color. The program brings young people of color into libraries to assist with special projects, work closely with library staff in a supportive and creative environment, and serve and help shape the future of their community.

With support from the Department of Public Health and grant funding, LA County Library provides stipends for these young people for their work building bridges to their neighborhoods and connecting library programs to youth and community stakeholders, all while providing the young people with work experience and creating a pathway to county employment.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Books are not the only thing you can borrow at LA County Library. The library's latest program has become overwhelmingly popular—over half a million people responded to a promotion on TikTok—and involves lending tools.

For LA County Library, fostering a new environment to learn and providing additional community engagement is always a priority. Due to high demand, the library is looking into taking the program a step further and creating a demonstration lab. Once implemented, these workshops could include everything from how to make a cake to how to fix your bike.





## BUILDING A PROGRAM RENAISSANCE

Following the pandemic, LA County Library rethought its early education and literacy programs and the gaps in engagement and learning loss that exist. Now, they're in a "program renaissance," which involves re-engaging young people into education and literacy and recreating these programs.

To accomplish this, they're using JEDI—justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion—an initiative 5 years in the making that ensures programs and services reflect the community's needs. While working toward achieving systemic change, LA County Library learns from partners doing similar work with the goal of providing the best services possible to the many diverse communities that make up the library's service area.

## FEELING SEEN AND HEARD

With so many walks of life in Los Angeles County, it's important that patrons walk away with a sense of belonging after their visit—because in a county of 10 million people, it's easy to feel invisible. LA County Library visitors are made to feel seen and heard, as well as feel like they have a place that they belong, regardless of their citizenship, financial situation, or if they speak English or not.

A key program that embodies this goal is Citizenship in a Bag, a collaboration with the Office of Immigration Affairs. A few years ago, LA County Library's partnership with them resulted in creating a multilingual website presence and providing patrons with a toolkit of educational materials to help them learn more about the United States and prepare for the naturalization process was crucial.

Community member Rosalinda Cardenas became a U.S. citizen through using the library's resources, then acquired a high school diploma through another program partnership. Her success story speaks volumes to the importance, scale, and reach of how using free library services can have a positive impact on people's lives and ultimately help them achieve their dreams.



*"I grew up in foster care and moved around a lot, so I would use the public library in my town to be the place that I could feel grounded and safe. I could sit in the library with my headphones on and not be disturbed and not have anyone ask me why I was there. I was free to roam, so I hope that people have that same kind of feeling that I did when they visit LA County Library."*

**— Skye Patrick, Library Director**



# Long Branch Free Public Library

Long Branch, New Jersey

ADDRESS: 328 BROADWAY, LONG BRANCH, NJ 07740

PHONE: (732) 222-3900

WEB: [HTTPS://WWW.LONGBRANCHLIB.ORG/](https://www.longbranchlib.org/)

DIRECTOR: TONYA GARCIA



Serving a population of about 30,000, Long Branch Free Public Library knows even the most innovative ideas and programs can't get off the ground without a supportive network backing them. That's why they credit their remarkable staff, volunteers, and trustees as the driving force behind its successful initiatives, services, and programs. The independent library is dedicated to changing patrons' lives and helping them reach their fullest potential.

## WHERE INNOVATION MEETS TRADITION

Long Branch Free Public Library understands the importance of taking a chance on new ideas. As a Carnegie library that's over 100 years old, Long Branch's legacy is rooted in tradition—but they also were the first public library in New Jersey to hire a full-time social worker, which was seen as a risky move.

Their staff's dedication to adapting programs and support to meet the needs of their community is at the heart of what they do. Director Tonya Garcia can personally attest to how programs have impacted her life and the patrons that she's served.

Well before she became director, Garcia was working as a part-time computer lab monitor at the Technology and Career Center. Five minutes before closing, an older woman came in asking for help

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Too many community members repeat the cycle of incarceration and criminal justice system involvement. After conducting research on the correlation between low literacy rates and incarceration, Garcia knew something had to be done.

In 2009, she created the Fresh Start Reentry program to work one-on-one with people who have been incarcerated. They partnered with the Department of Parole to become a reconnection center and help people get back on their feet.

When community member Earnest Carter came to the program looking for a job, Garcia asked him what his one wish was. He wanted to be a high school graduate, so at almost 40 years old, she helped him get his GED. Carter graduated and went to community college—and came back to the library for help with his first bibliography. Later, he started his own trucking company, and when Garcia's son needed help, Carter gave him a job, saying she "changed my life and I wanted to do the same for him."





learning how to use Facebook. Garcia stayed late with her and quickly learned why she wanted to use the social media platform so urgently: her son was stationed overseas and she could only communicate with him through Facebook messages. The woman and her son had a real-time conversation in the library that day, and the excitement on her face will always stay with Garcia.

### KEEPING IT LOCAL

Some of the library's latest collaborations involve the Brazilian and Mexican consulates offering services out of the library for new immigrants. In addition, a new partnership with Brookdale Small Business Development Center resulted in a small business entrepreneur program in Spanish and English for Latino small business owners. Now, a small business roundtable will be part of their greater Long Branch Chamber of Commerce, and participants will share resources and ideas and network to grow or launch small businesses in Long Branch.

### RENOVATING AND REBUILDING

Fostering a welcoming environment is crucial, and Long Branch is excited to unveil a renovation next summer that will allow the library to welcome in even more visitors to their space. Thanks to New Jersey Construction Bond Act and a match from the city, the library will recover from the catastrophic flood that happened a few years ago.

The renovation will also allow them to restore the Carnegie section back to its "Carnegie majesty," including lifting the ceilings, exposing the original Carnegie windows, and installing pendulum lighting. Garcia and the staff are eager to cut the ribbon and have their community walk through the doors.

*"I wasn't sold on librarianship, but I took a chance when I won an IMLS diversity scholarship through the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program. Back then, I didn't imagine a degree was in my future, but life comes full circle!"*

**— Tonya Garcia, Director**



# Museum of Discovery and Science

Fort Lauderdale, FL

ADDRESS: 401 S.W. SECOND STREET, FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33312

PHONE: (954) 467-6637

WEB: [HTTPS://MODS.ORG/](https://mods.org/)

PRESIDENT & CEO: JOSEPH COX



People have so many different experiences when they visit the Museum of Discovery and Science—some are broad, and some are deep. But the museum’s goal is to ensure that all experiences are inspiring and give individuals the opportunity to participate in creating a better place. Since 1977, their mission has been to connect people to inspiring science by creating engaging experiences and evolving to meet the needs of its community. As our world evolves, the museum changes by listening, reacting, and staying engaged with what matters.

## **TAKING THE FIRST STEPS IN SCIENCE**

Stories of children who visited the museum and fell in love with engineering, paleontology, physics, or chemistry and went on to a career in those fields drive the museum’s staff to continue inspiring the next generation of scientists. The museum strives to be a place that transforms lives, where the youngest of visitors are taking their first steps in science.

But even if a lifelong love for science doesn’t blossom at the museum, the critical thinking skills learned through these exhibits still leaves an impact on young visitors. By bringing partners together to engage and involve youth with a variety of programming, they never fail to excite new generations of museumgoers.

## **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT**

The *Hub for Resilience Education* was created to address environmental issues that are relevant to the South Florida community. In partnership with the Community Foundation of Broward, the Hub educates museum guests on solutions to help mitigate the impact of climate change by championing engagement, education, and action for environmental sustainability and resilience.

It serves as a new way to understand how the museum is working as a robust community partner to make a difference with these issues, while inspiring visitors and showcasing ways that the museum is moving toward a world that has adapted and thriving despite the impacts of climate change.

To date, the Hub has brought together more than 30 community partners large and small, from municipalities and universities to corporations and nonprofits. An expansion of the Hub going beyond museum walls is coming soon.







## EVENTS THAT MAKE AN IMPACT

With 150,000 square feet of space divided up amongst four pillars—early childhood education, health and wellness, environmental sustainability, and physical science—there is no shortage of exhibits to explore at the Museum of Discovery and Science. The museum reaches deep into the community and far beyond its walls. Their commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion impacts every program and service. The museum’s reach is particularly evident with STEMobile, a mobile museum, which impacts more than 50,000 annually, with 75 percent of programs delivered free of charge to low-income youth.

Special event days are always sure to draw a big crowd. This year’s Inaugural Visit Lauderdale Science Festival saw more than 10,000 guests, and the museum just welcomed 5,100 people to Eye of the Storm, their annual hurricane preparedness event. By partnering with Florida International University’s International Hurricane Research Center and Florida Division of Emergency Management, the museum makes sure that their community is prepared before, during, and after a storm hits.

## NEW MEETS OLD

The museum is looking forward to launching a new early childhood area called Discovery Spot for children six and under, their parents, caregivers, and teachers. It will bring together environmental sustainability and early childhood education with climbing structures, water play areas, and sensory areas.

Parents who grew up in the Fort Lauderdale area will still recognize the Great Gravity Clock, an icon of the museum. The 52-foot-tall kinetic energy sculpture is one of the largest in the world. Its popularity has grown so much, it’s now considered a rite of passage for new museum staff members who are locals to bring in an old picture of themselves with the clock when they were visiting the museum as children.

Another icon is the life-sized megalodon, an enormous prehistoric shark, that is so big the museum has hidden a life-sized imperial mammoth behind it.



*“I think what makes our museum so strong are encounters that a visitor has with one of our science presenters, with box office staff, or with someone in the cafe. I’m so grateful to have such a powerful team who love what we do each and every day.”*

**— Joseph Cox, President and CEO**



# Riverside Art Museum

Riverside, California

ADDRESS: 3425 MISSION INN AVENUE, RIVERSIDE, CA 92501

PHONE: 951-684-7111

WEB: [HTTPS://RIVERSIDEARTMUSEUM.ORG/](https://riversideartmuseum.org/)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: DREW OBERJUERGE



With a mission to engage, inspire, and build community through the arts by presenting thought-provoking exhibitions and art education programs, Riverside Art Museum is driven by the power of the arts to bring people together to connect. The museum believes that art promotes empathy and understanding of others and in turn, uplifts human dignity of all people.

## LIVING AND LEARNING

First and foremost, Riverside Art Museum likes to be creative and find innovative solutions that meet the needs of their community. Theodore Roosevelt's quote, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are" has played a big role in shaping their work.

By partnering with Riverside Housing Development Corporation and the City of Riverside, the museum was able to create an "out of the box" project: The Branch, an artist-in-residence program that provides an affordable rental opportunity for an income-qualified artist. Community artist Juan Navarro currently lives and works on the property, engaging with residents and leading art programming.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture opened in June 2022 as a public-private partnership between Riverside Art Museum, the City of Riverside, and comedian Cheech Marin—an avid collector of Chicano art. The Cheech is a catalyst for the grassroots Riverside arts scene to encourage emerging Latino artists throughout the area.

The center is housed in a 40,000 square foot, renovated, city-owned building, where more than 100,000 visitors have been able to experience over five exhibitions that highlight Chicano artists.

The vision for the center was built around how it would impact the community. It serves as a platform to tell stories from Latino artists' perspectives, as a place to exchange knowledge, and as an incredible story of hope, innovation, and what people can achieve when they come together to make magic happen.





## CONNECTING THROUGH CREATIVITY

The museum's partnerships reach into many sectors. Through their work with Riverside Unified School District, they serve about 20,000 kids through their Art-To-Go program. Trained art instructors visit classrooms with art materials, lesson posters, and vocabulary charts and teach lessons to students. Lessons focus on learning about history, science, math, or famous artists, while exploring a variety of mediums, including clay, printmaking, oil pastel, paint, and/or colored pencil.

The program has enabled Riverside Art Museum to provide professional opportunities for artists interested in teaching, as well as ensure that students are receiving arts in the classroom.

## JOINING FORCES

The museum has been working with the Riverside Community Health Foundation for many years. In a nearby neighborhood that has been historically marginalized, they connected with community leaders to bring in an artist to paint murals in the neighborhood that illustrate resident-directed stories and values of the area.

Through this relationship, when the opportunity for funding the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture came up, the Community Health Foundation stepped up to galvanize other organizations working in Riverside around Latino-focused issues to collectively fundraise over \$700,000.

This partnership has been critical to the innovation of the museum from the top board-level to the program-level, and ultimately to the community that now feels a sense of ownership and pride thanks to the work that resulted from their collaboration.



*"It's critically important for Chicano art to be exhibited. It affirms the experience of those whose culture is expressed in the paintings, and it fosters understanding of the Latina/o/x experiences in the United States."*

*— Drew Oberjurgue, Executive Director*



# Toledo Lucas County Public Library

Toledo, Ohio

ADDRESS: 325 MICHIGAN STREET, TOLEDO, OH 43604

PHONE: 419-259-5200

WEB: WWW.TOLEDOLIBRARY.ORG

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/FISCAL OFFICER: JASON KUCSMA



You don't have to look hard to see that the Toledo region is experiencing a renaissance period: Strong economic development, dynamic minor league sports teams, and investment in a new Glass City Riverwalk contribute to a renewed sense of community pride here. The city's thriving library system—where one mantra is "books are just the beginning"—is a significant driver in the residents' quality of life, and they like it that way.

## DELIVERING FOR THE COMMUNITY

The goal of Toledo Lucas County Public Library (TLCPL) is to be the first place people turn when they want to broaden their horizons or connect with one another. Books and traditional library programming are a part of that, but the services they've designed to support their diverse community are many. With 400 employees all pulling together under a strategic roadmap, where one of the directives is to "Avoid Assumptions, Ask Questions", this library system is at its best when it is responding to the needs of the people it serves, whether that is providing nutritious and free meals through a partnership with SAME (So All May Eat) cafe, issuing dog licenses (which brings 20,000 people through the door each year who may not have come otherwise), or providing professional development opportunities through the Better Toledo series.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

The BIG IDEA program is a cornerstone program at Toledo, borne out of an internal conversation the library system had about its culture and what it wanted to accomplish. Ultimately, they decided one of their biggest goals was to be welcoming to all. Today, this DEI-focused initiative designs its programming around the many facets of the Toledo community. Library patrons can engage in numerous classes, workshops, readings, and other cultural activities. In June 2023, its programming ranges from celebrations of the Juneteenth observance to American Sign Language classes for those who are hard of hearing to a Pride and Poetry event celebrating LGBTQIA+ authors.





## MASSIVE SCALE, PERSONAL TOUCH

Most of the 430,000 people who call Lucas County home live within just a few miles of one of the library system's 20 locations. To ensure that the quality of the programming in these neighborhoods is consistent yet customized, the system has focused on understanding and building a culture of inclusion for their staff and those they serve. For example, the library uses retail merchandising principles to create dynamic displays that appeal to its diverse community members while maintaining organizational consistency. They also provide help with passports and voter registration, language classes and mock interviews for new Americans, and assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Their impact is evident: there are more than 300,000 library cardholders, 3 million visits to the system, and more than 1,000 hours of service provided to the community each week.

## WIN, WIN, WIN

TLCPL partners with community-based organizations so that they can leverage public infrastructure to amplify their work. They intersect with care providers to conduct health screenings, offer legal services through the Ohio Justice Bus, and work with area organizations to help provide meals for children throughout the library's locations. They even partner with parents of young children to implement the early childhood literacy program called Ready to Read, which trains more than 1,000 families annually to help their children build skills to become good readers. This program is comprised of a dedicated team within the library with an impact far beyond its walls; library staff go where families are—the toy section at Walmart, area laundromats and doctors' offices, parks and the zoo—to provide the resources parents and caregivers need to get their child exposed to reading skills early. Just over a decade old, Ready to Read touches thousands of people a year.



*"Ohio public libraries enjoy the highest use per capita in the country. When I started, I knew I was coming into a system appreciated by the community and one that was well-loved and well-used. We recognize our strengths, know what we do well, and build partnerships accordingly."*

*— Jason Kucsma, Executive Director/Fiscal Officer*



# National Medal Finalists

## *Congratulations to the 2023 Finalists*

Thirty institutions were named finalists for the 2023 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. From them, this year's eight winners were selected. Through the online Share Your Story initiative, museum and library community members highlighted ways these remarkable institutions have transformed their lives.



## **LIBRARIES**

Anaheim Public Library (Anaheim, CA)  
Island Free Library (Block Island, RI)  
Jeudevine Memorial Library (Hardwick, VT)  
King County Library System (Issaquah, WA)  
Kuskokwim Consortium Library (Bethel, AK)  
LA County Library (Los Angeles, CA)  
Long Branch Free Public Library (Long Branch, NJ)  
Miami-Dade Public Library System (Miami, FL)  
Ocean County Library (Toms River, NJ)  
Pottsville Area Public Library (Pottsville, TX)  
San Mateo County Joint Powers Authority (San Mateo, CA)  
South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) (Philadelphia, PA)  
Springfield Memorial Library (Springfield, NE)  
Toledo Lucas County Public Library (Toledo, OH)  
West Warwick Public Library (West Warwick, RI)

## **MUSEUMS**

Arts & Education at the Hoyt (New Castle, PA)  
Center of Science and Industry (COSI) (Columbus, OH)  
Discovery Museum (Acton, MA)  
Discovery Science Center of Los Angeles aka Discovery Cube (Sylmar, CA)  
Fort Garland Museum and Cultural Center (Fort Garland, CO)  
The Franklin Institute (Philadelphia, PA)  
Jim Gatchell Memorial Museum (Buffalo, WY)  
Museum of Discovery and Science (Fort Lauderdale, FL)  
Museum of Us (San Diego, CA)  
Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education (Portland, OR)  
Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science (Miami, FL)  
Riverside Art Museum (Riverside, CA)  
Rubin Museum of Art (New York, NY)  
Stax Museum of American Soul Music (Memphis, TN)  
Ukrainian Museum Archives (Cleveland, OH)

## The National Medal for Museum and Library Service

Since 1994, the National Medal for Museum and Library Service has honored outstanding institutions that have made significant contributions to their communities. Selected institutions demonstrate innovative approaches and a strong commitment to public service and community outreach. They are active in urban, rural, or tribal areas and engage with their communities in diverse ways, including by enhancing literacy, providing services to at-risk populations, supporting digital connectivity, and curating community narratives. The winners are selected by the director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services in consultation with the National Museum and Library Services Board.

## The Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. IMLS envisions a nation where individuals and communities have access to museums and libraries to learn from and be inspired by the trusted information, ideas, and stories they contain about our diverse natural and cultural heritage. To learn more, visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).

## National Museum and Library Services Board

The National Museum and Library Services Board is an advisory body that includes the IMLS director, deputy directors of the offices of museum and library services, and general counsel, and presidentially appointed members of the general public who have demonstrated expertise in, or commitment to, library or museum services. Informed by its collective experience and knowledge, the board advises the IMLS director on general policy and practices, and on selections for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

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Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services\*

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The mission of IMLS is to advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. The agency's four strategic goals are to Champion Lifelong Learning, Strengthen Community Engagement, Advance Collections Stewardship and Access, and Demonstrate Excellence in Public Service.

Learn more at: [www.imls.gov/about](http://www.imls.gov/about)



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