

The National Medal for Museum and Library services is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exciting ways. Columbus Metropolitan Library CFO Dewitt Harrell and community member Khamall Howard traveled to Washington to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the library impacts the community.

Dewitt Harrell: As the treasurer and the board member for CHWIC Central High work force investment corp, the Columbus Metropolitan Library, we forge a partnership to help our community with job help centers in which we help many of our members in the community get back to work. Starts with providing abilities for them to develop resumes to get help in terms of identifying where the job openings are, and it concludes quite possibly even with the job fair where we just recently outworked with the city of Columbus. There was over a 1000 job seekers at our main library branch. Thirty employers. I am proud to say this mid November 1000 new jobs were identified. As a result of not only our expo being an anchor but four other expos that took place throughout the city. And over a 1000 of our community members got jobs.

Khamall Howard: I got involved actually three summers ago as a community intern, it wasn't just me working there as an intern, once a week they had a program where they would help me with, they'd do workshops for -- all the people in the program were high school students. They would get us ready from doing finances for college and also they would give us workshops on how to do a resume, things of that nature in trying to get us better prepared for going out into the workforce. And then in February they hired me as an employee, so now I am a library service aid at the library and I am still there. The main things that I do is shelve books and customer service, so as I am shelving books if any customer has any questions on where to go in the library or resource the library how to utilize it, they just ask me the question and I kind of help them. I got in to the library through the CHWIC program as a community intern and so I try and inform other high school students if they are looking for an opportunity to work somewhere to volunteer library is a perfect place to do it.

Dewitt Harrell: One of our three goals is to catch our youngest community members as early as possible in terms of early literacy and we have a ready to read program, which is an outreach program that with great partnership and great support to the tune of \$1.2 million. We've been able to develop ready to read corps that go out in to the community and even at different places where caregivers and parents would take kids for say medical attention or just about anywhere they go in the community. We have a ready to read corp where we go reach out and meet with those caregivers, those parents and provide information in terms of literacy, provide books to kids who are about to enter into kindergarten and even a library card. The goal we know from our research is that 30 to 40% of those kids are not ready for kindergarten, so it's our goal to not be inside our four walls which we do extremely well in terms of books so forth and so on but our goal is to be outside our four walls, go out where customers are and meet these young people and more importantly educate the caregivers and parents about the value and the benefits of literacy.