

2013 National Medal Winner Video: Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County

Narration: The National Medal for Museum and Library Services is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exceptional ways. Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, The Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director Kimber Fender and community member Amina Tuki traveled to Washington from Cincinnati, Ohio to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the library impacts the community.

15:47:04

Kim: The public library of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, is one of the largest, busiest, and oldest public libraries in the country, and // our mission is connecting people to the world of ideas and information. And some of our goals include a number of things, but one of the critical ones that we've been working on is really working with literacy and lifelong learning.

15:48:29

Kim: We are very interested in making sure that the kids in our community have the education that they need. This was partly driven because we learned last year that Cincinnati had the third-highest rate of childhood poverty in the country. And // so we needed to do things on two sides of that issue. One was to help the kids

who are in poverty today get the basic services they need, but the other is to make sure that they get out of poverty so that this does not continue in future generations. And we think education is one of the keys to raising children out of poverty. So that's why we've worked very hard with kindergarten readiness, with the Read On program to get kids reading at grade level, and to make sure that they stay in school and graduate on time.

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Amina: First when I started to come to library // I come for homework center with my daughter. She do her homework there.

15:36:26

Amina: // Because I can't help her at home.

15:52:08

Kim: We established Homework Central as a new department, as part of our main library reorganization // and it's intended for any student who wants to come in after school and get some one-on-one help. We have staff working there, but we also have volunteers.

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Amina: They have a quiet place and staff there doing homework with it, and when they need help, like school, they raise their hand, and they come to help them.

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Amina: // She's twelve years old. She's in the sixth grade. She's A student. Excellent. And I'm proud of her.

15:49:41

Kim: Libraries are really well known for being involved in lifelong learning, because you can come to us at any age or stage of your life and learn something, either through a // self-guided learning by just checking out books, coming to programs that we offer. So we really do plan to have programs and services that meet all of those different needs at different ages. And that can be quite challenging, but it's something we're really committed to.

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Amina: Originally I'm from Ethiopia. // and I didn't have education at all, even for my mother language. And I can't even read my language. But // now I come to the library for reading, writing, speaking.

15:54:12

Kim: The Adult Learning Center is the Homework Central in the mornings, before the students get out of school. We realized that we had adults coming into our main library, into our Tech Center in particular, who needed more assistance than we could provide for them in that setting. So we took the staff from the Homework Central and have them working in the mornings in the Adult Learning Center to help prepare students for their GED test, to help them with English, with computer skills-- those kinds of one-on-one things that we couldn't do for them in another setting.

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Amina: Every week, two hours, one person sit with me to help me to read, how to read, help me how to write, how to spell, how to speak grammars. That what I get every week.

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Kim: It really does get to that idea of lifelong learning // who need to learn English so that they can do all the things that they need to do in our society-- to be able to do their grocery shopping, help their children with homework, apply for jobs online-- all of those things that require that basic knowledge of computers and English; and we think it's something that's vital to our goals and missions.

16:00:29

Kim: Achieving-- being awarded this medal has just been a tremendous experience for us. We've worked very hard to have an impact on our community. We feel very strongly that it's important for libraries to be involved in the communities, and I think it shows our community that we have their interest at heart. But I think it's also a reflection on the community support of the library. Part of this is that they come in and use our services very heavily, and without their

support financially and in use, we would never have been able to offer the level of programs and services we currently provide.