

**2012 MEDAL WINNER CUMBERLAND COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Speakers: Jody Risacher, Willie Wright

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>> FEMALE SPEAKER: 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.

Cumberland County Public Library Director Jody Risacher and community member Willie Wright traveled to Washington from Fayetteville, North Carolina to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the library impacts the community.

>> JODY RISACHER: Cumberland County is about 324,000 strong. It is a diverse community as you would expect. There is a strong military contingent within the community and because of the presence of military, that has added to the diversity in the community.

>> WILLIE WRIGHT: Fort Bragg, North Carolina is currently the largest military installation in the world in terms of personnel. There are about 58,000 to 65,000 soldiers affiliated with that installation. Many of the families, they live in the community so as a result of living in the community, they use the Cumberland County Library System.

Military personnel move frequently and they need information about the places that they are going to be going to and once they arrive, they can use the libraries to assist them.

I think the thing though that helps many of our military personnel is the fact that our system assists individuals with career development and so we have opportunities for them to come in, help them with resumes, provide computers if they need computers, and then we actually have job fairs where agencies will come in and set up in the library and individuals can come in and be interviewed.

>> JODY RISACHER: As the wars are winding down and more soldiers are coming back, there are other needs that are

emerging. We are now gathering resources and studying and determining how best public libraries can assist those soldiers who come back as wounded warriors in whatever ways and emotional ways and physical ways, help assist them and their families.

In the last few years with the economic downturn, our public library like all public libraries discovered a real need to participate in workforce development in the community. We found that there are a lot of people who have lost their jobs or are trying to retrain. They are seeing the need to develop better skills usually in the area of technology.

We offer small classes that are very low-key for people who are trying to gain the skills and offer one-on-one assistance.

There are about 30% of the population is under eighteen and that translates to the public libraries, a need for a strong children's programming component.

You may have heard of the STEM initiative and that is science, technology, engineering, and math. There is a great need to encourage young people to pursue careers in those areas and you need to start young.

Last spring there was a North Carolina Science Festival and our library participated and had over a thousand - over a thousand children participate in a series of programs that included robotics and ooey-gooey science experiments, those kinds of things that are fun and also excite children and make them want to look a little further into that area.

So we are an integral part of the community. We are an anchor institution and we are there to help people grow in whatever way that they decide they want to grow.