

2012 National Medals for Museum and Library Service Ceremony

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>> SUSAN HILDRETH: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us for the 2012 National Medal for Museum and Library Service Award Ceremony. Today we recognize the extraordinary work of ten outstanding museums and libraries from across the nation and celebrate the valuable role these institutions and all museums and libraries play in our communities.

We're very proud to have members of the National Museum and Library Services Board with us today. They are all sitting together and I will just mention them and where they're from. We're very - we've seated just eight new members today and we're very proud of them and our board members here include Charles Benton from Illinois; Julia Bland, Louisiana; Christi Brandau, Iowa; Burt Castro, Arizona; John Coppola, Florida; Paula Gangopadhyay, Michigan; Luis Herrera, California; Eric Jolly, Minnesota; Susana Torruella Leval, New York; Mary Minow, California; Tina Orcohal (ph), Washington; Lawrence Pijoux, Alabama; Winston Tabb, Maryland; Susanne Thorin, New York; and Bob Wedgeworth from Illinois.

So thank you all for joining us today. I also would like to acknowledge the members of congress who are here today and we are very happy to have Congressman Jason Altmire from Pennsylvania. Thank you so much for coming.

And also we are very happy to have Mrs. Tipton and representing her husband, Scott Tipton from Colorado. So I'm sure you have a wonderful first name, Mrs. Tipton.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about the role our board members play in this process. They bring passion and leadership to the Institute of Museum and Library Services and they help strengthen the educational and cultural life of our country. They also lend their expertise to the National Medal selection process by their careful review of nominations and sharing insightful recommendations, so thank you very much.

For our current board members and the new ones, you have a big task ahead of you and we're looking forward to your advice. Thank you very much.

So each of you here today, you play a very important part in promoting the tremendous value of museums and libraries to our nation. These institutions are community anchors that offer life changing learning experiences. They have long contributed to our country and they are responding to the needs of 21st Century learners with creativity and vitality.

I'd also like to acknowledge that our museums and libraries in our neighbors to the north who were hit with a desperate storm from Sandy have really been doing a great job in terms of bringing those communities together, providing light, power, and just a place to come together in need. So we really would like to acknowledge our friends that were hurt by Sandy but are really making a difference in the lives and restoration of some peace and sanity up there.

The libraries and museums we honor today show us what is possible. They are places that are using their physical and digital spaces, their collections, and their dedicated staff to make a real difference in community life.

The National Medal for Museum and Library Service is the highest national honor conferred on museums and libraries and to sum up why this year's honorees have earned this award, I believe First Lady Michelle Obama put it best.

In a message to our recipients, Mrs. Obama wrote, "Congratulations to the winners of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. This year's recipients share a common commitment to excellence, the spirit of innovative thinking and the determination to serve their home communities. By pushing the boundaries of what's possible and embracing new ideas and approaches, these award winners have challenged the conventional notions of what a library or museum can and should be. Congratulations again. I wish you all the best."

And I certainly join Mrs. Obama in her sentiments and add my sincere congratulations to our medal winners.

It is my tremendous honor to introduce our guest of honor, Cecilia Muñoz, Director of the Domestic Policy Council.

Prior to this role, Cecilia served as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs where she oversaw the Obama administration's relationship with state and local governments.

Before joining the Obama administration, she served as Senior Vice President for the Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation at the National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest Latino civil rights organization.

She supervised policy staff, covering a variety of issues of importance to Latinos including civil rights, employment, poverty, farm worker issues, education, health, housing, and immigration.

Her particular area of expertise is immigration policy which she covered at the Council for twenty years. Please join me in welcoming Cecilia Muñoz.

>> CECILIA MUÑOZ: Welcome to the White House everybody. I'm so excited to be here with all of you and I guess it's fitting that we gather in this space. This is known as the Indian Treaty Room. I don't think there were any actual treaties signed here.

But it's a fitting space because it served as a library and while it is, you know, elaborate and pretty snazzy, it occurred to me as I was watching the video that it doesn't begin to serve as the kind of community hub as the places that we're honoring today.

And as somebody who is the daughter of immigrants and who grew up in one of those wonderful, big, messy extended immigrant families, I just am extremely grateful for the role that the kinds of institutions you represent play in making us one nation and connecting people and connecting communities and connecting people to ideas.

It is an extraordinary contribution that you make and just as a personal matter, I am very grateful for it, so that is one of many reasons I am excited to be here today to welcome you and congratulate you all.

All across the country, institutions like the ones we're honoring today are opening up young eyes to passion, understanding, and opportunity. Our nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums help level the playing field and break down geographic, language, economic, or physical barriers that make

it difficult for people to get the information that they need and to get connected to each other.

They serve as beacons of knowledge and community development in the cities and towns where you reside. And nearly every community across the country has a library or museum to call their own. And with robust online networks and dedicated staff and volunteers that keep them moving forward, these museums and libraries connect people to ideas and very importantly to one another.

But I should say and you all know that these are also times of real challenge for libraries and museums across the country. Economic strains are causing reductions in budgets that support the great work that you do and you're not immune to the tough economic conditions that all of us as a nation have been enduring.

At the same time, in some ways for the very same reason, public demand for libraries and museums continues to be strong. Communities are looking to libraries and museums as full partners in education, workforce development, adoption of new technologies, integration of immigrants. We really need you.

And you're not only filling the gap. You're helping communities imagine new ways to leverage your assets in support of core citizen services and really to do more with less, fulfilling a really special civic, educational, and cultural mission.

Without museums and libraries, it would be more difficult, maybe impossible, for many people to pursue their education, seek employment, and lead the kind of lives they envision for themselves and we all have so much riding on their ability to do that.

You all are fundamental institutions in our communities. You support really some of the fundamental values of our democracy, the tools which make our democracy possible, and I should say that the Institute for Museum and Library Service plays a unique role and I just would like to take a second to commend Susan on her remarkable leadership of the organization.

We're living at a time when strategic use of resources could not be more important and IMLS's role to provide leadership, funding, data, research has been essential in helping libraries and museums navigate change and evolve their services. And you

know perhaps better than anybody that we are living in a moment of extraordinary change. So this is an incredibly important service.

Over the past several years, IMLS has worked across governmental agencies to encourage collaboration on a host of goals, including using libraries and museums as centers for workforce development, the advancement of high quality learning experience for our youngest Americans, and the adoption of broadband technology in ever more communities.

So across the country, creative libraries and museums are helping people strengthen communities and bringing people together for a better future. The connections that you all are making to new ideas, connecting people to each other, fortify the civic and educational fabric of the nation.

It really gives me great pride to be here today to celebrate all of you and especially to thank you for what you do. I should say that I have a daughter, a daughter who is getting ready to go to college, and the things she wants to do and to prepare for is to work in a museum and we have lots of conversations around the dinner table - you could do the wave for that, right?

We have lots of dinner table conversations about how the things that we're reading, the things that she is interested in that connect us to our own history, how important they to what drives us forward in the future.

And so I look forward to going home today and telling her that I got a chance to be here with all of you and celebrate the work that you do. It couldn't be more importantly really. So congratulations but especially thank you.

>> SUSAN HILDRETH: So I am now very honored to introduce today's MC, NPR Senior National Correspondent, Linda Wertheimer. We're very excited and honored for Linda to join us this year. She has been with NPR since the network's inception. Her award winning coverage has captured pivotal moments in history and she has achieved many firsts, including being the first person to broadcast live from inside the United States Senate Chamber, as well as being the first woman to anchor network coverage of a presidential nomination convention and of election night.

Linda has served as a senior national correspondent since 2002. She previously spent thirteen years hosting NPR's news magazine, All Things Considered.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome this year's MC, Linda Wertheimer.

>> LINDA WERTHEIMER: Good afternoon. It's a great pleasure for me to have a small part in the ceremony to bestow this prestigious award on the nation's best libraries and museums.

I am a big fan of libraries. I remember with great affection and respect, the Public Library of Carlsbad, New Mexico where I grew up. My favorite memory of the library is the day my friend Mary and I found some odd looking bugs that nobody knew what they were on my mother's roses. So we put a few of them in a peanut butter jar, hopped on our bicycles, and went to the library to ask the librarian, Mrs. Milton, what they were.

And like - Mrs. Milton, Mrs. Helen Milton didn't even blink at bugs coming into the library and she also didn't answer the question. Like the good librarian that she was, she pointed - she introduced us to a new word, etymology, and she pointed us at books and she said - she said once you think you know what it is, then there are other books that have big pictures so you can identify your creature and it didn't even take very long for us to do it.

We identified the little insect as something that would shortly develop into a ladybug. So we felt it was good for the roses and we were glad we had not destroyed them all.

I remember that day for sixty years at least because Mrs. Milton made me feel so smart and so powerful to have all of the library at my disposal.

Now I am going to read the names of the institutions and the leaders of those institutions and each medal winner has brought with them someone on whom their institution has had a positive impact. I will read the names of the honorees and I will - and the representatives who will accept the award and include a little bit about each of these community members.

When we call your names, please come forward to accept the National Medal for Museum and Library Service from Director Susan Hildreth.

Bootheel Youth Museum of Malden, Missouri. Patsy Reublin is the Executive Director and she comes with community member Lauren Collins. As a little girl, Lauren was a frequent visitor

to the Bootheel Youth Museum and then she signed up to volunteer to fill part of her curriculum at Southeast Missouri State University and she has maintained this connection over the years. Now she embodies the spirit of volunteerism that makes communities strong. She is amazing with kids and at the museum, she has found a place where those skills could be developed.

According to the Director, she is the face of the museum.

The Contra Costa County Library of Pleasant Hill, California. The Director is Barbara Flynn and Mary Pipo (ph), Chairman of the Board comes as well and the community member is Gladys Leeks. Gladys never stops learning, never gives up. She is a leader, former business owner, storyteller, world traveler.

At age sixty-seven, she learned to read through Contra Costa County Library's adult literacy program which is called Project Second Chance. She said of the program, "All the facets of my life have been enhanced by the growth of my reading skills. I no longer have to look at pictures to understand movies or menus. I can now read to my grandchildren."

And now the Cumberland County Public Library of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Jodie Risacher is the Library Director. Sarah Vanderclout (ph), a member of the Board of Trustees, and the community member and Board Chair is Willy Wright (ph).

Willy has volunteered at the Cumberland County Public Library since 1995. As an army veteran, he understands the support the Cumberland County Public Library offers military families facing transitions and difficult separations.

Willy says, "The local library is always a place where service members can feel at home."

Next, the Garfield Park Conservatory of Chicago. President Eunita Rushing. Margo Morris is the Chairman of the Board of Directors and the community member is Tiara Livingston. Nineteen year old Tiara has participated with the Garfield Park Conservatory's Green Teens program since her freshman year in high school.

Growing up on Chicago's west side, Tiara saw firsthand the challenges and troubles her neighborhood was facing. Through the Green Teens program, Tiara gained job readiness skills, participated in resume and cover letter workshops, and learned

more about the opportunities that a college education would provide.

Today, Tiara is a sophomore at DePaul University.

And next the Long Island Children's Museum of Garden City, New York. Suzanne LeBlanc, the President. Robert Lemle, the Board Co-chair, and community members Francisco Kihara (ph) and his daughter Ruth.

Together to Kindergarten is a community focused initiative for Spanish and Haitian speaking immigrant families. Francisco and his wife Ana praise the program for preparing their children to start their future.

The program helped Ruth become so comfortable with English that she did not need an ESL classroom setting for kindergarten. Francisco felt at ease because everyone spoke the same language and everyone was there to help the children.

He says, "We're better prepared to play a role in our children's education."

Congratulations.

And next, the Museum of Contemporary Art in North Miami, Florida. The Executive Director and Chief Curator, Bonnie Clearwater. North Miami's mayor, the Honorable Andre Pierre, and community member Cassandra Timothy.

Cassandra's parents were raised in Haiti and moved to Miami before she was born. For the last seven years, Cassandra has been actively involved in MOCA with ever increasing responsibility.

She says, "Anyone at any age can relate and learn to appreciate art. If it had not been for the people at the museum, I know I would not be where I am in life today. From thinking critically to analyzing carefully, the MOCA experience," Cassandra says, "is one that will change your life."

Cassandra says her first job, her mentors, her scholarships, and even her college roommate came as a result of her involvement at MOCA.

The Naturita Community Library of Naturita, Colorado. Paul Paladino is the Director. Scott Shine is the President of the

Board of Trustees. And the community member, Jaimy Fulbright, is also here. Jaimy is a wife, the mother of young boys. She has overcome many challenges. She started volunteering at the library in 2006 where she developed confidence and new skills. She found that drawing on her own experience, she was able to be empathetic which enabled her to be an effective resource and a guide for others.

Last summer, Jaimy was hired to coordinate the library's early literacy activities. Now she is taking classes with the ultimate goal of receiving her Master's Degree in library science.

The Pacific Science Center of Seattle, Washington. The President and CEO, Bryce Seidle is here. Christopher Ackerley who is a member of the Board of Directors and the community who is here is Andrea Nichols.

Twenty-one-year-old Andrea began volunteering at the Pacific Science Center in high school as part of the discovery corp. She began with little interest in science. All of that turned around when she found herself at a Science Center weekend event holding a snake for the first time.

In that moment, she overcame her fear of reptiles and discovered a passion for science.

She recently graduated from the University of Washington where a senior project focused on reptiles and involved a study of snakes on Orcas Island. She is now part of the education team at the Science Center.

Parkview High School Library Media Center of Sterling, Virginia. Candace Main Rush and Jennifer Fisher, library media specialists, are here. Parkview High School Principal Virginia Mintrue (ph), and community member Pablo Rivera.

This high school senior was selected by the Parkview High School Library Media Center librarians for exemplifying the impact the Loudoun County, Virginia Library has on student achievement.

Pablo, who is Student Council Association President, frequents the library before and after school to complete his homework. He performs in the library's morning concert series as a member of the multicultural ensemble, and he interacts

frequently with staff to find information and ask for suggestions about what he ought to read next.

Congratulations.

And finally the Shaler North Hills Library of Glenshaw, Pennsylvania. The Director, Sharon McRae is here with community member Janet Miller. When Janet's husband died in 2007, it was a difficult time. She was happy to have a job and continue to work. She is a people person. She knew it was best to keep busy. When she retired from her job two years later, she needed a place where she could put her talents to work and three weeks later she found that place at the Shaler North Hills Library.

She says she sees teens in the afternoons after school. She participates in the book club and helps with the book sale. The library considers Janet a treasure and Janet says she feels good and is enjoying life and the library.

And of course the other gentleman here is the panelist.

>> SUSAN HILDRETH: So today we have heard stories of ten people with diverse interests and aspirations who found that libraries and museums can provide incredible opportunities to grow.

Each is a story of transformation for these individuals and you know, it really helps me believe that every day when I go to that office building in Washington, DC and trudge away at my job, that I am making a difference. We are making a difference when we hear these great stories of the impacts we have on individuals' lives.

These special libraries and museums help people to fulfil, to follow their passions, explore talents, and build skills that lead to personal and professional fulfillment. This year's winners represent the best of our nation's libraries and museums. There are countless stories across the country of Americans young and old learning, enjoying, and opening doors to new and deeply powerful experiences at their local museum or library.