

2013 Medals - PL Cincinnati

Speakers: Kimber Fender, Amina Tuki

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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.

The 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.

>> KIMBER FENDER: The Public Library of Cincinnati and 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.

Some of our goals include a number of things but one of the critical ones that we have been working on is really working with literacy and lifelong learning.

We are very interested in making sure that the kids in our community have the education that they need. This is 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 to 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.

We think education is one of the keys to raising children out of poverty so that is why we have 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.

>> AMINA TUKI: First when I started to come to the library, I came for Homework Central with my daughter. She did her homework there because I can help her at home.

>> KIMBER FENDER: We established Homework Central as a new department as part of our main library reorganization. It is 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.

>> AMINA TUKI: You have a quiet place and the staff, they are doing homework with it, and when they need help like in school, they raise their hand and they come to help them.

She is twelve years old. She is in sixth grade. She is in a student, excellent and I'm proud of her.

>> KIMBER FENDER: 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 that we are really committed to.

>> AMINA TUKI: Originally I am from Ethiopia and I didn't have an 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.

>> KIMBER FENDER: The Adult Learning Center is the Homework Central in the mornings before the students get out of school. We realize that we had adults coming in to our main library and to 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 had 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 can do for them in another setting.

>> AMINA TUKI: Every week, two hours, one person sits with me to help me to read, how to read, helps me how to write, how to spell, how to speak, grammar. That's what I get every week.

>> KIMBER FENDER: It really does get to that idea of lifelong learning, of realizing that not all learning takes place in a structured classroom setting, that this is a way for people to keep learning who need to learn English so that they can do all of 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 those things that require that basic knowledge of computers and English. We think it is something that is vital to our goals and missions.

Being awarded this metal has just been a tremendous experience for us. We have worked very hard to have an impact on our community. We feel very strongly that it is 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 is also a reflection on community support in 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 that we currently provide.