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Milwaukee Public Library awarded ALA's first Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant

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CHICAGO -- The American Library Association (ALA) has awarded its first Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant to the Milwaukee (Wis.) Public Library for Deaf Storyslam, a free community event in which Deaf individuals of varying backgrounds share personal stories and experiences with the broader community.

The \$2,000 grant, part of ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC) community engagement initiative, is open to school, public, academic, tribal or special libraries to help them expand upon community engagement efforts. Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with community members — be they library users, residents, faculty, students or local organizations — to address issues for the betterment of the community.

In May 2019, ALA announced that it had surpassed its original \$50,000 fundraising goal to support the creation of the Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant, raising a total of \$70,000 from 130 individuals. The initiative was made possible by a matching grant from former ALA president and longtime generous supporter Nancy Kranich.

"This has been an exciting effort and one I'm proud to have funded -- a great opening for our first round of grants," said Nancy Kranich, who teaches a new generation of civically focused librarians in the Masters of Information program at Rutgers University. "Deaf Storyslam is a worthy program, and Milwaukee Public Library's proposal is beautifully constructed."

The Milwaukee Public Library will use the Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant to launch the second year of Wisconsin Deaf Storyslam. The first Wisconsin Deaf Storyslam had an attendance of over 100 and received a nomination for a local Innovation Trailblazer MANDI (Milwaukee Awards for Neighborhood Development Innovation) Award.

For the second wave of Deaf Storyslam, the library seeks to increase the number of Deaf community members in the planning process, train additional Deaf community members as storytelling coaches, increase attendance and continue to offer the trilingual (American Sign Language, English, Spanish) format.

“The selection committee was heartened by the breadth of applications from all corners of the country. They reflect library workers’ wide and deep interest in understanding community needs and aspirations, and commitment to working alongside community members to achieve the changes they want to see,” said Jean Canosa Albano, the LTCEG committee chair and assistant director for public services at Springfield (Mass.) City Library. The LTCEG committee consists of a chair and four ALA members appointed by the Public and Cultural Programs Advisory Committee (PCPAC).

To stay informed on the Libraries Transform Communities Engagement Grant and future offerings, sign up for the Programming Librarian Newsletter: programminglibrarian.org/about/get-our-enewsletter (<http://programminglibrarian.org/about/get-our-enewsletter>)

About the ALA Public Programs Office


The American Library Association (ALA) Public Programs Office empowers libraries to create vibrant hubs of learning, conversation and connection in communities of all types.

About Libraries Transforming Communities

Since 2014, LTC has reimagined the role libraries play in supporting communities. Libraries of all types, from across the country, have utilized the free dialogue and deliberation training and resources to lead community and campus forums; take part in anti-violence activities; provide a safe space for residents to come together to discuss challenging topics; and have productive conversations with civic leaders, library trustees and staff. Learn more at www.ala.org/LTC (<http://www.ala.org/LTC>). LTC is administered by ALA’s Public Programs Office.

About the American Library Association

The American Library Association (ALA) is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, the ALA has been the trusted voice for academic, public, school, government and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library’s role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all. For more information, visit ala.org (<http://ala.org>).

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