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"Talking Books" Finds Its Voice Again at Hartford Public Library

Hartford, Connecticut (February 20, 2014) - Hartford Public Library will soon welcome another critical literacy service for the region - **The Greater Hartford Unit of Connecticut's Talking Books Program will take up residency in the Downtown Hartford Library this spring.** The new partnership will allow the all-volunteer program to continue to provide audio books and other recorded materials for free distribution to anyone who cannot read a traditional book due to visual or physical impairments.

"Our core mission is to provide free resources for unlimited learning to all, regardless of background, language, economic status or physical ability," said Matt Poland, CEO of Hartford Public Library. "Talking Books is the connection to a world of knowledge for those with physical barriers to access. We are thrilled to support this important program providing equal opportunities for learning to an often underserved population."

Early in 2013, the Greater Hartford Talking Books Unit learned that it would no longer have a space in the facility where it was housed for 35 years because of a major renovation. A Hartford Courant editorial describing the unit's plight caught the eye of Poland, who recognized an opportunity for Hartford Public Library to designate space in its state-of-the-art Downtown facility allowing Talking Books to continue its important work.

"It just made sense," said Poland. "Hartford Public Library is redefining its role in the 21st century through innovation and technology to encourage exploration, discovery and, of course, reading. We are the perfect home for an organization that does just that for the visually and physically impaired in our community."

Since its founding in 1979, the Greater Hartford Unit of Talking Books has recorded over 1,000 books. With no paid staff, the organization relies solely on the effort of volunteers. Creating audio books is an exacting and laborious process - one 300-page book can take up to a year, or more, to record, and must be done in a special soundproof recording booth. The Talking Books studio will be located on the Downtown Library's second floor, along with YOUmedia Hartford, a new digital learning lab for teens slated to open in fall 2014.

ABOUT TALKING BOOKS

Talking Books is a service under the Library of Congress and Connecticut State Library. The Greater Hartford Unit of Talking Books is one of five in the state, and is run by Connecticut Volunteer Services for

the Blind and Handicapped, Inc. (CVSBH), which distributes the recorded materials and provides necessary playback equipment at no cost to the user. In 2013, The Connecticut State Library distributed 180,680 talking books. For more information or for volunteer opportunities, the Greater Hartford Unit can be reached at talkingbooks@hplct.org.

ABOUT [HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY](#)

The Hartford Public Library traces its roots to 1774. It operates 10 locations and a Library-on-Wheels in the City of Hartford. The Library receives more than 860,000 visits per year. Services include access to a large collection of materials for reading and research, as well as music and video. Programs provide education, information and enrichment to the people of Hartford in such areas as citizenship training, literacy, business skills and cultural awareness. The mission of Hartford Public Library is to provide free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Visit hplct.org and the library's new blog at blogs.hplct.org.

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