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Foundation, Corporate and Public Funding Supports New Digital Learning Center at Hartford Public Library



HARTFORD, Connecticut (January 28, 2014) – Hartford Public Library has been awarded **grants totaling \$375,000 from Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and its Beatrice Fox Auerbach Foundation Fund** to support the creation of **YOUmedia Hartford, an innovative digital learning center for teens**. The recent award, coupled with **existing support from the City of Hartford and other corporate and foundation donors (Comcast, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Berkshire Bank, New Alliance Foundation, and The Foundation for Greater Hartford)**, allows development plans to move forward on the state-of-the-art lab to be located at the Downtown Library. YOUmedia Hartford will serve Hartford’s approximately 13,500 teens by providing a high-tech learning lab that connects student interests to future academic and career success, while decreasing the digital divide and providing leadership opportunities that engage teens with their community.

“Hartford Public Library is a vital component of our city’s comprehensive efforts to provide children with the opportunities and resources needed to ensure that educational activities continue after the school day has ended,” said Mayor Pedro Segarra. “YOUmedia will support Hartford teens by providing the opportunity to develop beneficial technology skills, receive mentoring and guidance, and connect with their communities.”

YOUmedia will be home to the young adult collection of books and media, laptop and desktop computers and a variety of advanced media creation tools and software, including a recording studio, which will allow teens to express themselves and their interests through music and spoken word. Teens in YOUmedia will have the opportunity to attend free workshops, book discussions, author events and performances.

“Hartford’s teens face the great challenge of developing relevant skills in our ever-evolving technological society,” said Hartford Public Library CEO Matt Poland, who also serves as chairman of the Hartford Board of Education. “With generous support from foundation grants, corporate donors, and the City of Hartford, the Library will soon be able to provide the cutting edge training, opportunities and resources Hartford teens need in order to compete in the 21st century world of work. YOUmedia Hartford is an example of the power of public-private partnerships to provide creative solutions to community needs.”

The YOUmedia concept is based on groundbreaking research which maintains that *learning must be socially connected, interest-driven, and oriented toward educational, economic, or political opportunity*. **YOUmedia Hartford will be a transformative space: an open, flexible, highly creative laboratory that inspires teens to think, play, and learn in different ways.** Teens can hang out, mess around, and geek out on no-tech, low-tech, and high-tech activities, based on their interests and talents. **Mentors will be critical to the YOUmedia space**, and will be available both online and in person. Librarians, artists, and instructors will guide youth as they explore digital media. Visiting digital media experts, spoken word poets, filmmakers, sound mixers, librarians, and museum staff will lead workshops based on the interests of participants. **YOUmedia Hartford will provide an encouraging atmosphere for minority teens and young women, traditionally underrepresented in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields, to explore new passions and technologies.**

“Ensuring that all young people have the skills they need to be successful in college or in the workplace has been a priority at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. We are pleased to support the innovative work of Hartford Public Library to provide a space for teens throughout the city to develop high-tech, 21st century skills,” said Linda J. Kelly, President of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. “Hartford Public Library is truly reimagining its role in the lives of city youth, and is developing a state model for the library of the future.”

The first YOUmedia lab was created in the Chicago Public Library. Since then, YOUmedia labs have opened in Miami/Dade County Public Library, the Hirshorn Museum in Washington D.C., and Dreamyard in New York City. Similar approaches have been adapted by emerging learning labs across the country.

While the focus of the design of YOUmedia is to support youth in out-of-school time, Hartford high school teachers with classes of students are also able to reserve the space for skill-building workshops during the school day.

YOUmedia Hartford will offer regular afterschool, Saturday, and summer hours, and a Fall 2014 opening is anticipated. All high school age teens are welcome, and may utilize YOUmedia technology for free with a valid Hartford Public Library card.

For more information on YOUmedia, please visit www.youmedia.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.

ABOUT [HARTFORD FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC GIVING](#)

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is the community foundation for Hartford and 28 surrounding communities. It receives gifts from thousands of generous individuals, families and organizations and has awarded grants of more than \$600 million since its founding in 1925. For more information about the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, visit www.hfpg.org or call 860-548-1888.

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