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Hartford Public Library a Finalist for 2013 National Medal

WASHINGTON (February 14, 2013) – The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) today announced Hartford Public Library as a finalist for the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. The National Medal is the nation’s highest honor conferred on museums and libraries for service to the community. The award as finalist, given to only 33 institutions nationally, celebrates libraries and museums that make a difference for individuals, families and communities.

“Museums and libraries serve as community gathering places and centers for lifelong learning, and we are very proud to announce Hartford Public Library as a finalist for the 2013 National Medal,” said Susan Hildreth, director of the IMLS. “This year’s finalists exemplify the many wonderful ways museums and libraries can respond to the needs and wants of the communities they serve.”

The IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums.

“We are honored to be among the best libraries and museums in the nation,” said Matthew K. Poland, the Library’s chief executive officer. “Thanks to the staff, the board, and the amazing people of Hartford we have created this ‘place like no other’ – a 21st century center for learning and civic engagement.”

Finalist status for the 2013 National Medal is recognition of the Hartford Public Library’s broad agenda of public outreach and community service, an agenda which includes not only traditional library services but such programs as The American Place, which provides language and citizenship classes for new immigrants as well as assistance finding jobs and integrating into a new world. The Hartford History Center, which is a vast collection of three centuries of Hartford-related materials held within a museum inside the library, is another of the programs unique to the library, as is CTWorks@HPL, a partnership that offers a host of services for job seekers. In the last seven months, more than 2,100 people have been assisted in their efforts to find employment.

“The miracles of art and literature are hard to appreciate if you can’t read or don’t have good reading skills, or are desperate for work. We offer help finding jobs and help in learning to read as well as the kinds of enrichment programs that add to every life,” Poland said. “We want the library to be a place where people truly live and explore as well as learn. Free jazz concerts on Sunday afternoons, book

talks, homework clubs, community conversations and ArtWalk, where visitors view changing exhibitions of art with local connections, are all part of our goal, which is to serve our citizens.”

Two other Connecticut institutions are being honored as 2013 finalists: the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, the library’s neighbor on Main Street in Hartford and the first public art museum in America; and Yale University’s Peabody Museum of Natural History in New Haven.

Beginning today, the Institute of Museum and Library Services in Washington will begin collecting stories from community members who have visited the Hartford Public Library and have experiences to share about how the Library has made a difference in their lives. The way to share your story, which will be posted on the IMLS Facebook page, is to go to www.facebook.com/USIMLS

To learn more about the Institute of Museum and Library Services, please see www.imls.gov

About Hartford Public Library

The Hartford Public Library traces its roots to 1774. It operates 10 locations in the City of Hartford. The Library receives more than 865,000 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. According to a recent editorial in *The Hartford Courant*, “Indeed, the Library has established itself as the center of the community in Hartford.” To learn more about the Library, please see www.hplct.org.