



CONTACT:
Rachel Gary
Communications Manager
860-695-6352
rgary@hplct.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The Travelers Foundation Funds Innovation Center at Hartford Public Library's
Teen Digital Learning Lab with \$50,000 Grant**

HARTFORD, Connecticut (September 16, 2014) – When teens visit Hartford Public Library's new YOUMedia digital learning lab, they won't just be able to *do* – they'll *create*. **Thanks to a generous \$50,000 grant from the Travelers Foundation, YOUMedia Hartford will include a teen “makerspace”: a manufacturing center combining practical, hands-on experience with innovation in Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).**

Under the guidance of mentors and visiting artists, teens will have the opportunity to complete high-tech projects featuring advanced electronics, textiles, 3D printing, laser cutting, and more. YOUMedia Makerspace (YmM) stresses creativity, collaboration, invention and entrepreneurship, guiding students from imagination to actual production. **Programs offered at YmM and YOUMedia Hartford decrease the digital divide many underserved urban students face and broaden the range of tools with which teens can express themselves.** The funds provided by the Travelers Foundation will outfit the makerspace with advanced tools, equipment, materials, and software, and provide support for staffing and programming that highlights STEAM activities.

"Hartford's teens are creative, innovative, and eager, but many lack the appropriate tools, guidance and support to see their ideas to fruition," said Matt Poland, CEO of Hartford Public Library. "Thanks to the generous support of the Travelers Foundation, the YOUMedia Makerspace will serve to combat information poverty by democratizing access to technology and information and helping our students develop the 21st century skills necessary to compete in an ever-evolving technological world."

The interest-based, connected learning concept at the core of the YOUMedia Hartford mission will allow students to "hang out," "mess around," or "geek out" with tools at their own pace. Hands-on makerspace activities will inspire teens to think critically and solve problems in a repeated process of brainstorming, testing, and going back to the drawing board. **This active learning supports knowledge creation instead of knowledge consumption, and gives underrepresented teens equal access to tools and technologies that expand future possibilities.**

YOUMedia Hartford opens to teens ages 13 – 19 on Monday, October 7 at the Downtown Library. Teens and their parents are invited to a grand opening celebration on Friday, October 3 from 6 – 8 p.m. For more information, visit hplct.org/youmedia.

ABOUT HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

As a finalist for the 2014 National Medal from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Hartford Public Library has been recognized as national leader in redefining the urban public library in the 21st century as an innovative and stimulating place where people can learn and discover, explore their passions, and find a rich array of resources that contribute to a full life. Hartford Public Library provides free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Serving the residents of Hartford and beyond at its nine branches and Downtown location, Hartford Public Library receives more than 860,000 visits per year from adults, children and families seeking early literacy opportunities, work skills training, civic engagement, arts enrichment, and so much more. Visit hplct.org.

###