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YOUTHEMEDIA HARTFORD HOSTS PARTY FOR TEENS AND FAMILIES

Digital learning & maker space celebrates one-year anniversary

HARTFORD, CT (September 21, 2015) – Hartford Public Library's YOUTHEMEDIA Hartford, a digital learning and maker space for teen, will celebrate its first anniversary with a party on October 2 for teens and their families at which they can unleash their inner geek in celebration of an outstanding first year.

Thanks to generous support from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Travelers Foundation, The Hartford, the Beatrice Fox Auerbach Foundation Fund, Comcast, Fund for Greater Hartford, Wells Fargo, New Alliance Foundation the City of Hartford, and private donations, the Library opened the city's first teen-centered digital and maker space in October 2014. Focused on practical skill building, STEM learning, and hands-on experience, YOUTHEMEDIA Hartford provides teens ages 13-19 with access to the tools and resources they need to achieve their goals in high school and beyond.

"I would never be on the track to success if I did not go to YOUTHEMEDIA," said Christopher Brown, 18, UCONN freshman. "YOUTHEMEDIA is my safe heaven when I'm down, or when I'm stressed. I do my homework, rap, mess around, hang out or geek out! That's the motto! I would advise all teenagers to come here!"

The space itself is research-informed and utilizes principles of connected learning and HOMAGO—a learning theory that suggests that informal learning environments allow teens to experiment with skills and tools through peer interaction and guided mentorship.

Over the last year, YOUTHEMEDIA Hartford has focused its programs and offerings around creation, production, invention, and entrepreneurship. Thanks to the help of mentors and visiting artists, and in collaboration with community partners, teens have completed high-tech projects featuring advanced electronics, textiles, 3D printing, laser cutting, music production, and more. Last March, several teams of youth used YOUTHEMEDIA equipment to create digital projects they then entered into the 2015 Reel Youth Hartford Film Festival. One team even took home the "Hartford Awesome Award." Currently, teens are utilizing the recording studio to produce, distribute, and market a "Best of Hartford Hip Hop" album with the help of local musicians and mentors.

Excited to commemorate a successful year of learning and relationship building, Hartford Public Library will open its doors for an after-hours party for teens and their families along with our generous investors. The event will include a photo booth, PS4 gaming, caricature artists, glow-in-the-dark face painting, teen performances, dancing, music, and food from local businesses. Yes, there will be cake.

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"What a great year it has been thanks to so many people," said Hartford Public Library CEO Matt Poland, who also serves as a member of the Hartford Board of Education. "We are proving everyday how transformative learning can be when it's socially connected, interest-driven, and oriented toward educational, economic, or political opportunity in a supportive environment of friends and caring adults. A track to success."

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ABOUT HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

As a finalist for the 2013 and 2014 National Medal from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Hartford Public Library has been recognized as a 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 833,000 visits per year from adults, children and families seeking early literacy opportunities, work skills training, civic engagement, arts enrichment, and so much more. Visit www.hplct.org.

ABOUT YOUMEDIA HARTFORD

The first YOUMedia started at Harold Washington Library in Downtown Chicago in 2009. A place where teens could freely explore their own interests, the space became popular and gained nationwide attention for its innovative programs. YOUMedia Chicago has transformed the role of public libraries in learning.

YOUMedia Hartford is a next generation digital learning and maker space for teens ages 13-19 only. Our combination of professional tools, eager learners, and skilled mentors sets the bar for informal learning. Our partnerships with schools and businesses create pathways for students beyond the library walls and beyond high school. Visit youmedia.hplct.org