

# H P L MAGAZINE

BEYOND  
WORDS  
2019



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY  
WINTER 2020



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## As we close out 2019 and look forward to 2020, we have so much to celebrate at Hartford Public Library.

Earlier this year, HPL was honored to be a recipient of the 2019 Library of Congress Literacy Award for our innovative programming that supports immigrants and refugees through HPL's The American Place (TAP). Just this month, Homa Naficy, Executive Director of TAP, was selected as a winner in this year's prestigious I Love My Librarian Award from the American Library Association. Recognized for her leadership in our community and commitment to transforming lives, she is one of only 10 librarians in the country to receive this national honor. Her efforts in Hartford are legendary; she has touched the lives of thousands of people and barely takes a breath before embarking on the next project or program that will undoubtedly help thousands more.

Our Boundless initiative continues to evolve with Hartford Public Schools, and it was recently featured in the November 2019 issue of *School Library Journal*. Both Superintendent of Schools Leslie Torres-Rodriguez and I had the opportunity to discuss our unique collaboration at the Achieving Together event at the Indianapolis Library this past September. *Library Journal*, *School Library Journal*, community leaders and librarians from across the country were present for the second annual convention that focuses on partnerships between schools and public libraries. I am delighted to report that the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving recently approved a grant providing \$270,000 to support Boundless@Rawson, a unique model of collaboration between HPL and HPS to provide school library support for students and teachers and community access.

We were thrilled *beyond words* to receive the coveted 2019 Bank of America Neighborhood Builders Award. It is a true recognition of the work we do on many fronts to foster economic mobility including adult

education, youth engagement, workforce readiness and our new social enterprise, the Digital Library Lab (DLL). A one-stop imaging, digital archiving and photography service specializing in 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional objects and artifacts, the DLL will have social impact by training and hiring young people to digitize, code, create metadata and assist with administrative tasks.

And, in closing, just this December Hartford Public Library was the recipient of the Municipal Excellence Award for our submission: "Access to Archives: Providing Access to Rich Historical Public Documents". This recognizes the strong partnership between the City and the Library in ensuring preservation of and access to information, public records and historical archives. This is a core tenant of our mission and drives the mission of the Library's new Digital Library Lab.

Warm holiday wishes to all, thank you for being a part of the HPL community. We deeply appreciate your support!



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# Meet REYNA GRANDE

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*An interview with  
2019 Beyond Words  
Featured Speaker*

BY BESSY REYNA

**REYNA GRANDE** is one of the most important voices in Chicano/Latino literature in the USA.

From 2006 to 2017, her books for children and adults have received eleven awards. In 2012, her memoir “The Distance Between Us” was a finalist for the National Book Critics’ Circle Award, and in 2017, a recipient of the Literacy Association Children’s Book Award. “The Distance Between Us” has been selected for numerous “Common Reads Programs” from California to Michigan to Georgia and many other places across the country. In 2019, she has travelled from Oregon to Arizona to present lectures in schools, colleges and to be the keynote at numerous conferences.

**I** have yet to meet Reyna Grande but I feel as if I've known her for many years. In 2009, after I received an award from the Hispanics Association for Higher Education, I was surprised and pleased to find a note from Reyna congratulating me. Since then we started calling each other “primas,” cousins, because my last name and her first name are the same. Anyone reading her books will be as impressed, as I have always been to learn about her generosity, courage and indomitable spirit.

**BR: In your memoir *The Distance Between Us* you wrote about the extremely painful childhood experiences you endured, starting when you were four years old, as soon as both your parents left Mexico. You, your brother Carlos and sister Mago, were mistreated, denied food and punished almost daily by your grandmother Evila, where you lived. However, what is so remarkable upon reading your story is how the three of you found ways to support each other and survive an ordeal which lasted until you were almost ten years-old. How did that experience shape who you are today?**

RG: There are good things and bad things that came out of those painful experiences. I think my siblings and I formed a very strong, beautiful bond with one another. I wouldn't have survived my childhood without them, and I'm especially grateful to my older sister for the support and love she gave me. Those experiences taught me a lot about resilience, about holding on to even the tiniest sliver of hope, to not give in to despair. That endurance and perseverance has carried me all the way to where I am now.

But trauma is trauma. To this day, I still deal with it, and it affects me in different ways, such as being a mother. I'm actually writing an essay about it now—how my childhood poverty and suffering hinders my ability to relate to my two coddled upper middle-class American children.

I am still haunted by those experiences.

**BR: You convinced your father to bring you with him when he went back to get your siblings. You were almost ten years-old and had to cross at night, in very rugged terrain, three different occasions until you finally made it. That must have**

**been a harrowing and painful experience. Was “el otro lado” (the other side) what you had imagined once you got here?**

RG: The second half of *The Distance Between Us* goes into detail about what the U.S. was like versus what I had imagined it to be. In one of the chapters, I call the U.S. a “place of broken beauty.” Yes, it was beautiful—more beautiful than I imagined it, but its beauty was broken because of the hardships we encountered here. The thing is that when I finally crossed the border, I thought there would be no more

**BR: You wrote that you started learning English by reading books in your school's library. Since then, libraries have had an important place in your life. Do you have a favorite library you go back to?**

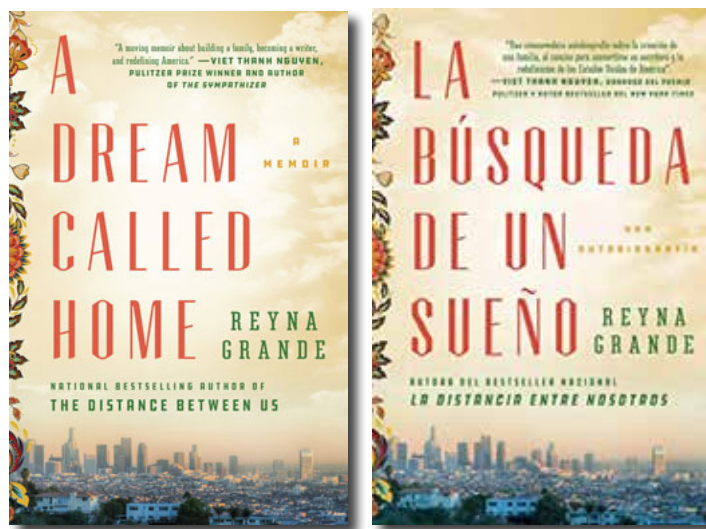
RG: My local library here in Woodland, CA, is very important in the community because there are no bookstores in town. I have done a few readings there. I also just recently taught a writing class there for VONA [Voices of Our Nation Artists]. Tonight, in fact, I am going there to participate in the career fair they are offering for the local teens. I confess I don't borrow

many books from the library because I buy all the books I want to read. It gets expensive, but as a writer who knows how important book sales are—I buy books to support other writers. If I want people to buy my book, then I have to be a book buyer, too.

But speaking of libraries—I was at the Library of Congress last month for the National Book Festival. There was an author gala hosted at the library, which is one of the most beautiful libraries I've even been to, with its beautiful marble floors, columns, and staircases. I kept pinching myself that night and

asking myself, how did I get here? What did I do to deserve this? —to be one of the guest authors, mingling with so many writers I admire, like Barbara Kingsolver and Joyce Carol Oates. There was a part of me that felt that maybe I didn't belong there. The library's beauty was so overwhelming to me. So untouchable. But then, the food was served, and of all the things the library staff could have served that night to all those distinguished writers—they chose tacos! So I told myself, if tacos belong here at the Library of Congress, then so do I.

**BR: In your new memoir *A Dream Called Home* you share your new struggles as a young woman, still living under very**



borders to overcome, but I arrived in California only to be faced with even more borders—language, cultural, legal borders, etc. Then of course, there was the consequence of our family separation to be reckoned with. After not seeing my father for 8 years, he was a complete stranger to me. The dynamics at home were complicated by our separation but also by his alcoholism and abusive personality.

No, life wasn't perfect and the U.S. was no paradise. But, the beauty that I found in this country was the beauty of possibility. Here, it didn't matter where I came from, what mattered was where I ended up. I made sure I ended up in a good place.



oppressive circumstances and with both your parents' betrayals and abandonment. What is so striking about you, and is so honestly stated in this book, is that you never gave up your "dream" to liberate yourself from your family, and to pursue your studies no matter what, even if it meant leaving everything behind.

RG: I always told myself that I wanted my future to be better than my past. I clung to that dream more than anything. As someone who came from extreme poverty, a broken abusive home, and who had all the

**BR: Going to the University of California at Santa Cruz, was another difficult experience, you really had no idea about the culture you would encounter. It took a while before you found other Latino students and felt less isolated.**

RG: Yeah, at UCSC I experienced the worst culture shock ever, but it was a necessary experience for me. The thing is that in Los Angeles, I didn't have a whole lot of culture shock. I did have some culture shock, but not like in Santa Cruz. In Los Angeles, the shock I experienced was that

make me uncomfortable—where I feel like a fish out of water. Learning to adapt quickly to my environment has helped me in this business I'm in—being a writer.

I have had to give presentations to a room full of white people, brown people, and everything else in between. I've had to speak to young and old, from 9-year olds to 90-year olds. I have spoken in elementary schools, middle-schools, high schools, college and universities, a military academy, and even a retirement home. I've spoken in classrooms, auditoriums, gyms, basketball courts, patios, parks, restaurants, you name it. Being in new environments is hard, but I've learned how to navigate unfamiliar places.

## No, life wasn't perfect and the U.S. was no paradise. But, the beauty that I found in this country was the beauty of possibility.

wrong labels—low income, immigrant, English Language Learner, first-gen college student—I had to work very hard to overcome the hand I had been dealt. But what I wanted, more than anything, was to get to a place where I had control over my life, where I got to live it the way I wanted to live it, where I felt that I had reached my full potential, that I was giving the best of myself. I don't want to be defined by the worst things that ever happened to me, or the labels that society gave me.

College helped me achieve the success I wanted to have. My university degree opened doors that had never been opened to anyone in my family. I come from a family that had no educational opportunities. My father went to 3rd grade, my mother 6th grade, and my maternal grandfather was illiterate. When I arrived in this country, I learned very quickly that the key to the American dream was higher education. So that is what I focused on.

I became the first person in my family to get a college degree because I wanted to break the cycle of poverty and lack of education that has plagued my family for generations. Now, at this very moment in my family, we have six children in college. The cycle is broken!

I came to live in a mostly Latino neighborhood, so everyone looked like me and I looked like them—the difference was that I was a child immigrant and the brown kids at my school were the children of immigrants. There is a difference. And though we were all brown Latino kids, they never let me forget that they spoke English and I didn't. That they had that precious U.S. birth certificate that gave them a legitimate claim to this country, and I did not.

Later, when my English was perfect and I had a green card, I didn't have any more problems with my Latino peers. But then I went to UCSC, and the university was only 13% Latino at the time so that is when I experienced culture shock in a major way. I didn't look like most of the students, and my immigrant experiences hadn't prepared me for the different way of life there. It was in Santa Cruz where I met my first vegan and vegetarian friends, for example. The first time I had split pea soup and alfalfa sprouts, tofu, and soy milk.

I grew a lot in Santa Cruz. If I had stayed in L.A., in my comfort zone, in my Latino neighborhood, I wouldn't have learned how to adapt to places and situations that

**BR: At a time where you had no place to live, it was your teacher Diana Savas who came to your rescue, offering you not only a home, but the emotional support you had never had before. She was also the one who first encouraged you to read books by Latina writers. In *The Distance Between Us*, you wrote "Reading Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* was a revelation because you didn't know until then that Chicano literature existed."**

RG: Yes, my professor Diana introduced me to several Chicana/Latina authors, even though she herself is Greek-American. But she loves my culture, and in addition to Greek and English, she can also speak Spanish. She went above and beyond what any teacher had ever done for me, including taking me into her home.

When people ask me why I succeeded when others in my situation wouldn't have, I always say, "because I had Diana." Diana worked very hard to convince me to pursue a writing career because at the time I didn't know that Chicanas/Latinas wrote books so I couldn't imagine a career as a writer. I thought it was just a silly dream. When Diana gave me *The House on Mango Street*, all of that changed for me. It was real. I had proof in my hands. If Cisneros was real, that meant the dream was real.

**BR: It was Maria Amparo, another teacher who, in 2003, encouraged you to apply for a fellowship for the "Emerging Voices" program for new writers. She**

**told you the program would change your life. Did it?**

RG: Absolutely! I always found that time to be magical. I met María Amparo at a time when I had almost given up on writing. I didn't know anyone in the writing community. I had no idea how to turn my dream into a reality. So I stopped writing for about three years while I was too caught up trying to survive in the adult world. Then one day I realized my dream was dying. In a last attempt to save my dream, I signed up for a weekend writing class with María Amparo. She suggested I apply to the Emerging Voices fellowship program, even though the deadline was at the end of the week. I applied, I got in, I finished my novel and found an agent—all within the year after I met María Amparo. Then, finally, my first book was published, and the rest is history.

**BR: One of the most striking things for me as I was reading *A Dream Called Home* was your honesty about your relationships with men, and how, while being a single mother you never lost sight of your goal to continue your studies, and finishing your ESL teacher certificate so you could get a better job. It must have been a very difficult time in your life. But, once again, you found the strength not to give up on your dream.**

RG: A question young people ask me a lot at my events is: If you could go back in time, what would you tell your younger self? My response: "Forget the men. Stop chasing after them. Learn to love yourself more." That is what I wish I could tell my younger self. Alas, I cannot, but I do say it to the young women I encounter. When I wrote *A Dream Called Home*, it was hard for me to revisit those times in my life when I cared too much about being loved by men. I realized though that it was a response to my disappointing relationship with my father. He gave me the wrong

idea of what love was. My father was emotionally unavailable. He could never say he loved me, that he was proud of me, no matter how hard I worked to "earn" his love, he hardly ever showed affection. So I developed the dumb idea that love had to be earned. Since I couldn't get my father to love me I went out to look for someone who would. I put too much value in that because for all of my life I had a missing father. First, by his physical absence, then his emotional absence. I had a hole in my heart in the shape of my father, and back then I didn't know how to self-soothe.

**BR: It took that same resilience for you not to give up being a writer. Your book *Distance* was rejected by 27 different editors, until one understood how immensely important it was. Did that little girl in the town of Iguala ever see herself as the successful woman you have become today?**

RG: In Mexico, the only dream I ever had was to have a mother and a father again. Sometimes, there are moments when I think this life I have is not real. When I go back to Mexico now as a published author, I feel like a soldier returning from a long great battle—triumphant, alive!

**BR: After your graduation and success as a writer, you and Ben Leeds Carson, Provost of Kresge College, the residential college where you lived as an undergrad, have established a scholarship for Chicano/Latino work. How is that program implemented?**

RG: The Reyna Grande Scholarship is open to any student who is working on a creative project that is intended to advance the standing and visibility of Latinx culture and history. In the winter quarter, we send out a call for applications, then a committee, made up of faculty and staff at UCSC, select the recipient. Besides my

donation and Dr. Carson's donation, I actively encourage my friends and family to donate to the scholarship as well so that I can support more students. If anyone is interested in contributing, they can go to <http://www.bit.ly/reynagrandescholarship> and donate!

**BR: You now have two children: Nathaniel and Eva Alana, and Cory, your husband—who proposed to you after hiding the ring in a bag of letters for the Scrabble game you often played together—and a home. However, when I visit your Facebook page, I notice that when you're home, you always seem to be doing something: from creating a garden, to painting the living room, or sewing Halloween costumes. Do you ever rest?**

RG: My husband and children will tell you that I do not know how to rest. I need to always be doing something, especially creative stuff. I keep fantasizing about my retirement, daydreaming of the day when I can just sew, and garden, and read, and play Scrabble, and make jewelry, all day long, without having to go to work. But then I realize that writers don't get to retire.

**BR: Which message do you want people to get when they read your books?**

RG: It doesn't matter where you came from. What matters is where you end up. ■



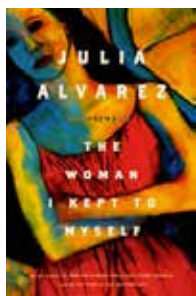
Bessy Reyna is the author of two bilingual poetry books, *The Battlefield of Your Body* and *Memoirs of the Unfaithful Lover/ Memorias de la amante infiel*. She is a contributor to *Identidad Latina* and [www.CTLatinoNews.com](http://www.CTLatinoNews.com). Reyna, whose work has been published in the United States and Latin America, is the recipient of numerous awards including the Connecticut Center for the Book of the Library of Congress' Lifetime Achievement in Service to the Literary Community (2009). ([www.bessyreyna.com](http://www.bessyreyna.com))

Fall is a fiesta of Latinx contributions to the arts, music, and literature at Hartford Public Library. This year's observance of Hispanic Heritage Month ran well more than a month and featured a salsa social, book and author talks, a documentary film and filmmaker, and an exhibit of famous Hispanics on USPS postage stamps.

On the literary front, Reyna Grande, author of the bestselling memoir, *The Distance Between Us*, was the headliner at our annual fundraiser Beyond Words. In the spirit of her achievements, we thought fall a fitting time to also call attention to the work of Latina poets, whose contributions have long been overshadowed by the better known Latino giant of the poetry world, Pablo Neruda.

Here's a list of Latina poets assembled by Graciela Rivera, branch manager of the Park Street Library and curator of HPL's Spanish-language collection. It represents a small sampling of works both in our collection and beyond. We hope it provides a starting point to explore less familiar Latin American voices that are as rich and varied as the individual poets and the time and place in which they lived.

### JULIA ALVAREZ



made into a movie produced by and starring Selma Hayek.

Julia Alvarez is a Dominican-American poet, novelist, and essayist who may be best known for her novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* and *In the Time of the Butterflies*, which was

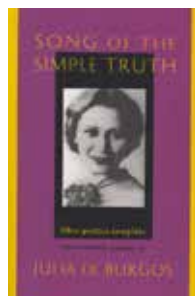
The theme of being caught between two cultures runs through both her poetry and fiction. Born in 1950 in New York City, Alvarez was raised in the Dominican Republic, but had to leave the country when she was 10 years old when her family supported an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Dictator Rafael Trujillo and had to flee to Brooklyn. Her other works of fiction include *Saving the World*. Alvarez also has several children's books to her credit. Her latest volume of poetry, *The Woman I Kept to Myself*, was published in 2004.

### CARMEN BOULLOSA

The writing of this Mexican poet and novelist deals largely with feminism, the gender roles of Latin American women, social and political injustices, and sexuality. Both her poetry and novels celebrate the tradition of magical realism. Boullosa's poetry has been anthologized in numerous collections. *Leaving Tobasco*, a coming-of-age story about a charming and imaginative

girl raised in a home filled with magical women, is one of her better known works of prose.

### JULIA DE BURGOS



This Puerto Rican poet, who got her own postage stamp, is credited with being one of the only writers of her generation to weave together themes of romance and political activism in her work. She

bucked the norms of her time, wearing pants and refusing to get married. Her work primarily focused on feminism and social justice. In addition to being a poet, De Burgos was also an activist for both women and African/Afro-Caribbean writers. Recommended read: *Song of the Simple Truth: The Complete Poems of Julia de Burgos*, translated by Jack Agueros.

### GABRIELA MISTRAL

This early 20th century Chilean, feminist poet whose real name is Lucila Gody y Alcayaga, was a one-time teacher of Pablo Neruda and the first Latin American woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Writing under the pseudonym Gabriela Mistral, she is best known for her work advocating the rights of women, exploring motherhood and sexuality, and her critiques of the homogenization of North America. Considered by many to be the greatest female Chilean poet of all

time, Mistral's face was even featured on Chilean banknotes. A good work to start with: *Madwomen: The "Locas mujeres" Poems of Gabriela Mistral*, a bilingual collection translated by Randall Couch.

### EXCILIA SALDANA

This Afro-Cuban writer and poet is best known for her experimental writing that blurred the boundaries between poetry and prose. Her work drew heavily from mythology and folklore, but above all she was a poet who strove to convey truths about the lives of Caribbean women, from domestic violence and female friendships to their dual roles as mothers and romantic partners. Try reading: *In the Vortex of the Cyclone: Selected Poems by Excilia Saldana*.

### ALFONSINA STORNI



Born in Switzerland and raised in Argentina, Alfonsina Storni is considered one of the most important modernist poets of Latin America. She spent her life writing from Coronda, Buenos Aires, and later Uruguay. Her work features both feminist and erotic themes considered progressive when she wrote them in the early 1900s. Check out *My Heart Flooded with Water*, a selection of poems from seven of Storni's collections, translated by Orlando Ricardo Menes.

■





Beyond Words Featured Speaker Reyna Grande.



HPL Board Members enjoying Beyond Words 2019. *1st Row:* Phyllis Shikora, Geraldine Sullivan, Melvyn Colón. *2nd Row:* Dan O'Shea, Antonio J. Matta, Floyd W. Green III. *3rd Row:* Rick Costello, Gregory C. Davis, Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, Arunan Arulampalam, David Barrett. *Not pictured:* Ana Alfaro, Andréa Comer, Andrew Diaz-Matos, Steven M. Harris, Edward C. Keith III, Karen Taylor.

# We are grateful Beyond Words.

HPL President and CEO Bridget Quinn-Carey with Beyond Words Co-chairs Beth Papermaster and Cate D'Italia.



HPL Corporator Margaret Patricelli and Mayor Luke Bronin applauding featured speaker Reyna Grande.





Beyond Words Committee Member Meryl Braunstein with her mother, Beyond Words Honorary Chair Joyce Mandell. The Mandell-Braunstein Family was the Beyond Words 2019 Presenting Sponsor.

Thank you to Tim Sullivan Jr. for leading Fund the Mission, which raised \$100,000 this year!



HPL Board Chair Greg Davis and Bridget Quinn-Carey presenting the 2019 Caroline M. Hewins Medal to Tai Soo Kim.





Jeffrey Hoffman, Nancy Hoffman, Dan Papermaster, Beth Papermaster, Joe Gianni, Mary Ann Gianni.



Barbara Kennelly, Joyce Mandell, Luke Bronin, Joyce Leibert.





Yugon Kim, Min Jung Kim, and Ryoung'Ja Kim.



Jay and Sonja Williams.



Ed Johnetta Miller with daughter Ayesha Miller.





Mayor Luke Bronin with HPL Teens.



Gwen Findley, Larlie Alvarango, and Elsa Huertas.



Virginia Seeley, Lynn Ferrari, and Gilda Roncari. ■

# TAI SOO KIM

A Reverence for Beauty. A Force for Good.

**T**his year's recipient of the Caroline M. Hewins award is Hartford architect and philanthropist Tai Soo Kim. Born and raised in Korea, he came to the United States in 1961 to study at Yale University under Paul Rudolph, then dean of the School of Architecture. He has been contributing in ways small and profound ever since.

The firm he founded in 1970, now known as TSKP Studio, celebrates 50 years of practice in 2020. The firm has been the force behind some of the most distinctive and recognizable modern buildings in the Greater Hartford region including the award-winning addition to HPL's Dwight Library, The Harry Jack Gray Cultural Center at the University of Hartford, The Mandell Community Center, the American School for the Deaf, the Greater Hartford Academy for the Arts and numerous other schools and institutions throughout the region, the state and northeast. He is also the architect behind the design of the new Park Street Library. His extensive portfolio also includes a number of international projects including The Korean National Museum of Contemporary Art and The United States Embassy in Tunisia.

Like the man himself, Tai Soo's designs are somehow understated and bold at the same time. Each one has a sense of harmony and a reverence for what surrounds them, be it a wooded hill, a busy street, or an older building. His projects have earned more than 40 local and national awards and publication in national and international journals. His long list of accomplishments and accolades includes election into the AIA's College of Fellows and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Hartford.

Tai Soo became enthralled with the beauty and history of Hartford soon after he arrived in 1961 to take a summer job after graduating from Yale. On his walk home each day, he often stopped at Hartford Public Library to read and get out of the heat, before making his way back to his

nership, so we started a practice together called Hartford Design Group in the top floor of the Railroad Station. At that time it was an empty abandoned place. He and I had to sweep all the pigeon poop out of the space at the end of the second floor. That's where I started.

**Hartford has been the architect's home base for nearly 50 years. It's my "pond," he says. "It gives me comfort. It's where I belong."**

sweltering third floor apartment on Buckingham Street. He went back to Korea briefly and then worked for Philip Johnson in New York for six years but returned to Hartford in 1969 and never left. Tai Soo's embrace of the city goes well beyond architecture. With characteristic humility, he downplays his philanthropic support of the University of Hartford and Elizabeth Park Foundation, to which he donated \$100,000 in May to plant trees. During a recent interview with HPL Magazine, Tai Soo talked about his career in architecture, his approach to his work, his enduring bond with Hartford, and the importance of giving back.

**Q. How did you come to start a practice in Hartford?**

TSK: A friend of mine, Jack Dollard, used to practice in Hartford. I got to know him. We were classmates. He got me a job at a firm downtown. So it started there. Eventually I would go to New York and work for Philip Johnson's office for six years, but I decided I wanted to have my own practice. Jack said he wanted to leave his prac-

**Q. What was your first impression of Hartford?**

TSK: In 1961, Hartford was in its heyday. It was a beautiful city with big trees hanging over the streets. Asylum Street and Farmington Avenue were just lined with trees. It was a beautiful, vibrant, and wonderful city. It was before the highway was built, so it really had an open feeling.

**Q. It was during that first summer that you visited Hartford Public Library, correct?**

TSK: Yes. I went there to cool off. The library had a big wonderful reading space. It was relatively new at that time. It was beautiful. I loved that space. Until they kicked me out, I would stay there.

**Q. Accomplished architects like you typically work in bigger cities like New York or Boston. What is it about Hartford that has kept you and your firm here for nearly 50 years now?**

TSK: The architect Le Corbusier said architects are like fish or something like



that. Fish need their own pond whether it's big or small. I think Hartford is my pond. It has been great for my family, for me, and for my practice. It gave me a base to operate and it gives me comfort. It's where I belong. Hartford has given to me and I have given Hartford something.

**Q. How do you approach the design of a building?**

TSK: I really start each project like a blank sheet and go to the site and see what hits me. That is really the beginning of my thinking process. I look to the surrounding area to spark my imagination or give me an idea of how the building should be. I think about how to harmonize all the best things in that spot. That's a key element of the building design. It should stand out and it should be fresh but it should work together as a whole and not disregard the surrounding areas.

**Q. How did you apply that approach to create your design for the addition to the Dwight Library?**

TSK: When I went to the existing site, the existing building was concrete block and closed in. But the location was right at a busy corner with lots of traffic. There were a lot of little stores in front. I thought, "You know, this could be a place you could set up a market. It's so open." That was my idea. The design is like fingers opening up to let people come in and that are reaching out. It's like an open market stand, I guess, reaching out to the community.

**Q. How did you develop this approach to design?**

TSK: When I came to Yale, there were

good students from all over the country, all over the world. At that point, I didn't have much Western cultural education, like philosophy and history. All the other students were talking about Nietzsche and Heidegger and so on. I started looking within myself to find my own source. I started thinking about images from my childhood, my memories of villages in



Korea, a simple landscape, or memories of simplicity or serenity. That was the beginning for me, when I discovered my own process. It always starts with a memory—something from my past becomes an inspiration for my thinking process. Now it's natural to go to the site and look at the surroundings and say, "ok, what's the idea here? What's the answer here?" I think inspiration is rooted in being yourself, finding your own way. Rather than trying to create something revolutionary, be simple.

**Q. In May you gave \$100,000 to Elizabeth Park Foundation. What motivated that very generous gift and your other philanthropy in Greater Hartford?**

TSK: I live about a block away from Elizabeth Park. I have walked there for 30

or 35 years. It is my backyard. I walk in the morning and think about what I am going to do that day. Lately I've seen the park cut many trees because they are getting old or because of storms. I started thinking the park really needs some new trees to bring the beauty back. I worked with the city tree warden and we picked the places to plant and the kind of trees

to plant. About 75 trees have been planted now. I have also set up scholarships for students at the art school and graduate school of architecture at the University of Hartford. And the TSK Travelling Fellowship is aimed at Korean architects, early in their careers, to travel, experience and absorb the architecture of the world.

You know my father was a scholar and he donated a lot of his collections. So he gave me that sense of about giving back, to contribute. He was not a religious man, but he told me at the end of your life, when you are ready to die, you want to be able to look back and say, "Okay, I did good for society. I did something good. I can go peacefully."

**Q. One of your latest projects is the new Park Library. Are you excited about that?**

A. Yes, I think the city made the right decision to inject some energy and investment in that street. There is no other street like Park Street in Hartford. It's like a Main Street kind of place. We put a lot of thought into how we could contribute to the life of the street and to uplifting all the people in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. At night, when the library is lit up, it will be a lantern to the entire community. It will make people say, "Hey, people care about us. The city cares about us." ■

## The Caroline M. Hewins Medal

Named for and inspired by the revolutionary librarian who helped create HPL and significantly expanded the very idea of the public library in America, the award recognizes an individual who embraces the City of Hartford and its people, who breaks the mold and provides service of a revolutionary kind, who stretches the boundaries of a social or cultural institution with humanistic approach to public service, and who powerfully advocates for the basic right of equal access to information and opportunity.

# THE DIGITAL LIBRARY LAB AT HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY



**A social enterprise  
accelerator  
program initiative**

**LAUNCHING  
JANUARY 2020**

We are excited to announce that the Library has raised over \$360,000 to date for the Digital Library Lab at HPL (DLL@HPL)!

## **We thank our generous early donors/investors:**

Bank of America - Neighborhood Builders  
Beatrice Fox Auerbach Foundation Fund  
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Timothy & Geraldine Sullivan  
David & Jill Barrett  
Anne Melissa Dowling  
The Barnes Group Foundation  
Brewster & Judith Perkins  
Nancy Wheeler & Tom Willits  
Catherine & Terry D'Italia  
Barry Lastra  
Deidre & Frank Tavera







### High Five

by Adam Rubin, illustrated by Daniel Salmieri

One of my favorite new books of the year, *High Five*, is by the creative team that brought us the very clever *Dragons Love Tacos*. The book itself is large,

bright and has playful illustrations. But the wonderful thing about the story is the way you are engaged to interact with it. The main character, a Yeti, is a former champion with a room full of trophies. He is looking for an apprentice to whom he can pass on his wisdom. Speaking directly to the reader, he provides them with training on how to high five. Not just a basic high five, but training to compete in the “75th Annual High Five Tournament.” The reader is high fiving the book and working on finesse, creativity and power. It moves on to the tournament with an assortment of characters that the child has to competitively high five, including a hot pink bear, a bright green kangaroo, a translucent lizard and a blue elephant. The final round is against a purplish octopus, with, you guessed it, eight high fives required to defeat him. The writing is clever and while easy for a child to enjoy, there are definitely lines to amuse an adult reading with them. This book works as a lap read, for the elementary reader and would also be an excellent read aloud. It has you smiling and participating right up to announcing the winner of the tournament (guess who?) and presentation of the trophy. This book will delight children and adults alike.

**Ages 3–5**

*Review by Bonnie*



### Thank You, Omu!

by Oge Mora

Omu cooks a stew so delicious that it attracts the entire neighborhood entranced by the fragrant smell wafting out her window and into the city streets. The first visitor is a little boy who is

playing in the hall of their apartment building. Omu is looking forward to her dinner that evening but decides she has enough to share and does so with the first visitor, the little boy, who receives it with gratitude saying, “Thank You, Omu!” Soon after, there comes another and another and another knock on the door. Visitors who have followed the delicious smell include a police officer, a shop owner, an artist, a bus driver and even the mayor! With each knock, Omu shares her dinner. When it’s time for her to enjoy her own meal, she finds a surprise and an even bigger surprise at the door! With collage illustrations and luscious vocabulary as scrumptious as the popular “thick red stew,” debut author/illustrator Oge Mora serves up her first unforgettable picture book to acclaim and praise. Don’t miss this one!

**Ages 4–8**

*Review by Katherine*

# WINTER STAFF PICKS



### The Nickel Boys

by Colson Whitehead

In *The Nickel Boys* by Colson Whitehead, we follow Elwood Curtis, a loving, hardworking, and precocious grandson doing his best to stay positive while growing up in Tallahassee, Florida in the Jim Crow South. He finds such solace and inspiration

in his recordings of Martin Luther King Jr. that he sets himself to get an education and make a positive change in the world. All who encounter Elwood notice his intelligence and devotion to honesty and hard work he is recommended to start college classes early before high school graduation. On his way to College, he unknowingly hitchhikes in a stolen car and the Justice system being what it was briskly sentenced him to the Nickel Reformatory Academy.

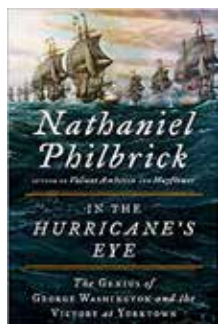
Elwood quickly learns that Nickel Academy is run with cruelty, fear, and government corruption. Standing up to defend someone earns him a severe beating his second day there and he finds himself in the hospital ward where he befriends another Nickel boy, Turner. Turner feels he has a more realistic understanding of the world and teaches Elwood that by keeping his head down, scheming, and being content with the little pieces of happiness they come across, they will survive Nickel just fine. While Elwood tries his best to follow Turner’s advice he finds himself feeling empty inside and he continually thinks upon Dr. King’s words, “Throw us in jail and we will still love you,” so he comes up with a plan which’ll help all the boys.

This is a small but powerful book which I felt the need to complete in one sitting. The fact that this book is inspired by true events that occurred at the Dozier School for Boys, a reform school in Florida which operated for 111 years makes it even more infuriating, dreadful, and poignant.

**Adult**

*Review by Johanna*





### ***In the Hurricane's Eye: The Genius of George Washington and the Victory at Yorktown***

by Nathaniel Philbrick.

*In the Hurricane's Eye* is a gripping retelling of events leading up to the Battle of Yorktown, the victory that decided the outcome of the American Revolution. Connecticut figures in the story since Washington and the French general Rochambeau met in Hartford and Wethersfield to plan the campaign. Originally published last season, the book is now available in paperback as well as hardcover.

**Adult**

*Review by Nancy*



### ***What Do They Do With All That Poo?***

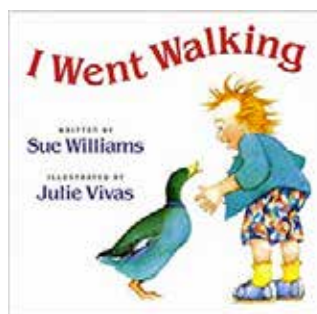
by Jane Kurtz, illustrated by Allison Back

*What Do They Do with All That Poo?* is a fascinatingly hilarious book you never knew you needed. If your child thinks bowel movements are hilarious (who doesn't?), then

this is the book for them! Read this book during the winter months as you prepare to visit a zoo in the spring, and maybe even buy some elephant poo paper! (Yes it's true, you can make paper from elephant poo! And as you will learn in the book, it's pretty and doesn't smell!). *What Do They Do With All That Poo?* is clever not only because it points potty mouths in a productive direction, but because it will grow with your reader. The bright and cheerful illustrations will capture the attention of younger readers, and the simple sing-song words at the top of the pages provide a funny story time that will help them learn to recognize words as you read. As children grow older and become more confident in their reading, they will be delighted to read the more complicated facts at the bottoms of the pages, such as, "An elephant can eat 300 pounds of leaves and grasses a day and then dump 165 pounds of poo. (To help you think about that, a football weighs about a pound.)." If you want to hear children laughter this holiday season (while still learning a thing or two!), *What Do They Do With All That Poo?* is sure to be a smash hit!

**Ages 3-8**

*Review by Victoria*

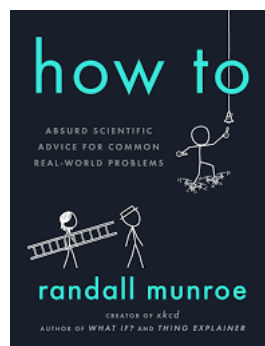


### ***I Went Walking*** by Sue Williams

This classic tale is a must read for young children! A frolicking little boy went on a thrilling adventurous walk through the countryside where he met a group of friendly farmyard animals who followed him around in his adventure. Young readers follow the vibrant little boy in this exuberant tale experiencing his joy and excitement as he meets all the charming animals: the black cat, the brown horse, the red cow are but a few of the farm animals presented in this colorful book. The narrative is lively, inviting, and engaging with numerous repetitions and predictable episodes inviting children's active participation. The art is warm, embracing, and bursting with playful watercolors all of which draws the reader to the lively camaraderie going on between the little boy and the animals. The story is great to read aloud but it is also as effective and perfect for an independent quiet read giving children the opportunity to make predictions and solve the mystery clues hidden on every page as they hope to find out who the next animal will be to join the boisterous group. The book's simple structure and the author's skillful use of the question and answer narrative makes it a valuable read aloud resource for little ones to build and develop their language skills.

**Ages 3-7**

*Review by Lina*



### ***How To: Absurd Scientific Advice for Common Real-World Problems***

by Randall Munroe

Witty, intelligent, and humorous, Randall Munroe's *How To: Absurd Scientific Advice for Common Real-World Problems*, explores everyday problems like how to how to send a file,

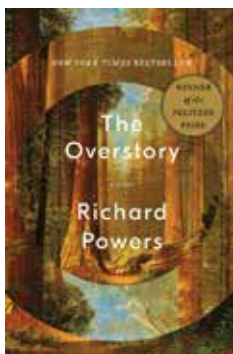
how to predict the weather, and how to mail a package to more outlandish problems like how to make an emergency landing on an enemy aircraft carrier, how to setup a power grid on Mars, and how to commute to the moon. Munroe states, "Every day over 10,000 people in the United States are learning something for the first time."

This title is a great read for problem solvers, those who like to think outside of the box, and the intellectually curious. Munroe, the creator of the xkcd, blends humor and science to help the reader think about how sometimes the best way to solve problems is to think outside the box and add a level of absurdity.

**Adult**

*Review by Will*





## **The Overstory**

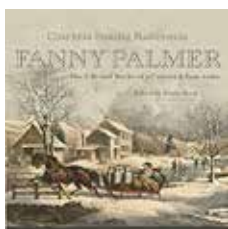
by Richard Powers

I bought this book in summer 2018 after reading Barbara Kingsolver's review in the *New York Times*—she being one of my favorite all time authors and I love trees! So I had to pay attention. The first line of her review got me: "Trees do most of the things you do, just more slowly." That was

followed by, "They compete for their livelihoods and take care of their families, sometimes making huge sacrifices for their children." The rest of the first paragraph continues in this manner, and I was hooked! So I bought the hardcover at my local bookstore, B&N UConn, but I must confess it took me a few months to read it (I read at night, and sometimes if a book is complex I can only manage a chapter or two) when friends/family asked what I was reading, I told them *The Overstory*—the *War & Peace* of trees! Many folks laughed, but I would highly recommend this book and I will read it again or listen to it in my car once I get through the piles on my bedside table it is that good! So, if you have a family member or friend who loves trees and a well written novel, look no farther: *The Overstory* is now in paperback and it might be the perfect gift for them!

**Adult**

*Review by Gilda*



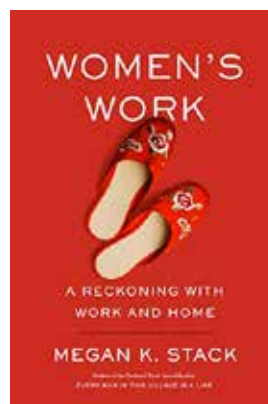
## **Fanny Palmer: The Life and Works of a Currier & Ives Artist**

by Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein,  
edited by Diann Benti

In the mid-1800s, at a time when few women worked outside the home, Frances Flora Palmer forged a successful career as an artist, creating iconic images of American life which were mass-produced and hung in homes and businesses across the nation. Art lovers and students of women's history will enjoy this lavishly illustrated book, which was written, edited and largely funded by women.

**Adult**

*Review by Nancy*



## **Women's Work: A reckoning with work and home**

by Megan K. Stack

Megan Stack and her husband are both American journalists living abroad. As such, they can afford a comfortable lifestyle, and are able to hire household help. As they approached the birth of their first child, Stack decided to leave her job, and spend her time writing a novel. She envisioned

spending her days writing, as a housekeeper/nanny took care of the baby. As anyone who has cared for an infant probably knows, the dream and the reality were starkly different. In this very personal memoir, Stack recounts the first year of her son's life in incredible detail. Even with the housekeeper's help, Stack quickly learned how much work falls on the mother. One weekend Stack went away, leaving the baby with her husband and the housekeeper. There was a need to take the baby's temperature, and her husband neither knew where the thermometer was kept, nor how to use it. The housekeeper could locate it, but was also unaware of how to use it. Stack was the only one who could cover both bases. And this wasn't because her husband couldn't or didn't want to be involved, it was just the way it happened. This isn't a story that took place decades ago; Stack's son was born in 2011.

The novel was eventually written, but not until Stack's second son was on the way a few years later. By that time the family had moved from China to India. *Women's Work* came to be when the novel was not published. Stack had, over time, learned that all the women she was hiring to care for her family, were leaving their own children with loved ones so they could work for her—a woman who needed time apart from her own children in order to work. Stack chose to learn more about the lives of these women and shares that information.

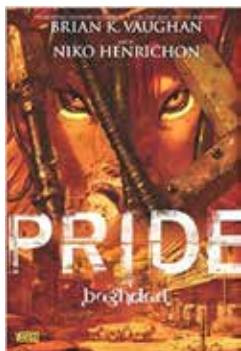
Written in a journalistic tone, Megan Stack adeptly relates life as a working woman and mother, and what that means for people from different walks of life. Even now in the 21st century, women are forced to give up different things than men are in order to be both a parent and a worker. Stack relates the cultural differences, too; such as, how what she as an American has to give up contrasts with what the Chinese and Indian women face.

There is a local connection to this, too. Megan and I graduated from high school together. Her mother retired as Editor of the *Glastonbury Citizen*, and her father was a copy editor at the *Hartford Courant*.

**Adult**

*Review by Jennifer*





### ***Pride of Baghdad***

by Brian K. Vaughan

*Pride of Baghdad* is an award winning graphic novel that combines the masterful storytelling of Brian K. Vaughan with the exquisite artwork of Niko Henrichson perfectly and provides the reader with a unique look into the plight of war.

This story was inspired by true events that happened in 2003 when four lions escaped the Baghdad Zoo following the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

We begin with the lions trying to understand what all the human commotion occurring around them is about and proceeds quickly into the bombing of the city. The story follows Zill (the alpha male), Safa (the pragmatic lioness), Noor (the idealistic lioness), and Ali (the eager cub) as they maneuver through the unknown terrain of the city, but while we see their confusion we as readers feel a strong sense of foreboding by the images of what we've come to recognize as "enemy structure." We travel with them as they come across two large hands holding crossed swords, known as the Swords of Qādisiyyah, and the Saddam Hussein statue and palace and one cannot help but recall the news report film showing its aftermath. The author does a great job of dropping us into the mindset of the lions and we are able to experience all the harsh and tragic effects of life outside and inside the zoo. Add to this their polar views on whether humans are their caregivers and protectors or the ones they should be holding responsible for the loss of their safe and secure home. In spite of their disagreements, they know that what their actual desire is to stay together and survive.

Henrichson's orange and brown color palette choices heightens the apocalyptic feel and does an incredible job of combining the beauty of the animals with the very graphic destruction that coincides with war.

This story is immersive, graphic, and emotional and does a phenomenal job of showcasing the devastation of war and what a heavy price freedom can sometimes be. As a standalone novel this book is a great introduction into Vaughan's impactful and masterful writing which I find myself always returning to.

**Adult**

*Review by Johanna*



**Looking for a new podcast addiction?  
Here's a few to add to your playlists:**

### ***Criminal*, by Phoebe Judge and Lauren Spohrer**

This is a true crime podcast for people who are curious not only about criminals and victims, but also about social and sociological aspects of crime, and the nuances of what is considered a crime. There are stories from the past and present, real and surreal. A recent Episode (124) describes the life and work of a Sandra Pankhurst, who started a trauma cleaning business almost 30 years ago in Australia. She is a remarkable woman, and it's a great story.

### ***Someone Knows Something*, by David Ridgen**

The Canadian Broadcast Company produces great podcasts. This series includes four seasons of different cold case investigations, each with a unique twist which the host unravels carefully and thoughtfully. He is a skilled and empathetic researcher and interviewer, who is able to build trust and relationships while maintaining his objectivity.

### ***Hidden Brain*, by Shankar Vedantam**

NPR is pretty good at the podcast business as well, but it may just be that I love to listen to Shankar Vedantam's voice. I love this podcast because every episode gives me a 'huh, that's interesting' moment.

### ***Slow Burn*, by Leon Neyfakh**

There are two seasons of *Slow Burn*, the first focuses on Watergate, the second on the Clinton impeachment. Season 1 was fascinating, particularly as my understanding of Watergate and the Nixon presidency was cursory and could be summarized with a few words and names: tapes, Deep Throat, Woodward and Bernstein, resignation. Delving into the details and learning about other investigations, processes and players was a crash course in American political history. The author states in his introduction: "The connections between the Nixon era and today are obvious enough. But to me, the similarity that's most striking is not between Donald Trump and Richard Nixon... Rather, it's that people who lived through Watergate had no idea what was going to happen from one day to the next, or how it was all going to end." Sound familiar?

Happy listening!

*Reviews by Bridget*



# Libraries Playing Bigger Role in 2020 Census

*HPL focuses on promoting participation, providing facts, and supporting use of the new electronic format*

**H**artford Public Library is counting down to the 2020 Census and, like libraries across the country, will play a bigger role in the decennial count than in 2010 or any other prior census.

That's because 2020 will be the first time the U.S. Census Bureau has gathered demographic information about the U.S. population online. While paper questionnaires will still be available in limited circumstances, the bulk of us will be asked to fill out a digital version of the questionnaire on computers.

Knowing public libraries are the go-to place for the 20 percent of the U.S. pop-

ulation without access to the Internet, census officials enlisted the American Library Association as a partner in the 2020 count. Officials are looking to libraries to help generate participation in hard-to-count census tracts such as Hartford. Ninety-nine percent of census tracts identified with the lowest response rate in 2010 are located within five miles of a public library, and an estimated 73 percent are located within a mile of a library.

Impressing on residents the importance of participating in the count is among the most challenging tasks facing committee members. The census is the basis for determining how much federal money comes to our state and our city, and how many representatives each state has in congress, said Quinn-Carey.

that sensitive information recorded on the survey will not be shared with any other federal agency, Quinn-Carey said. In fact, by law, responses on the census can't be used in any way against a person by a government agency or court. Nor can the census bureau share an individual's responses with immigration or law enforcement agencies, or allow the information to be used to determine eligibility for government benefits.

Census Day is April 1, 2020. Letters inviting residents to participate in the count will be sent out from March 12-20, 2020. The following week, a reminder postcard will be mailed out, along with paper questionnaires to a limited number of residents who have been granted an exception to submitting responses electronically. At about the same time, enumerators will begin knocking on doors in neighborhoods.

Quinn-Carey has been working with Cotto and other members of her leadership team to assess needs and allocate staff and resources. Every HPL branch will be involved in helping the census bureau reach into the community, from posting job notices for enumerators to providing a place for enumerators to meet with residents who need assistance filling out the electronic form.

This fall, staff training and a public information campaign are underway, along with an assessment of library hours to determine if any adjustments are needed in advance of Census Day. Cotto was on the front lines in 2010, providing facts and information as manager of the Park Street Library. ■

*Photo: HPL CEO Bridget Quinn-Carey with Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Mayor Luke Bronin and Congressman John Larson discussing the importance of being counted in the 2020 Census.*

**We want to be that one, or one of the, trusted resources in the community to help people navigate the process.**

"The process can be confusing," said HPL Chief Executive Officer Bridget Quinn-Carey. "We will be a trusted resource in the community to help people navigate the process."

Quinn-Carey serves on city and state Complete Count committees, an initiative kicked off last February by Connecticut Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Secretary

"It really helps us collectively when we all step up and are counted," she said.

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling in June, barring an effort to add a citizenship question to the census questionnaire. HPL staff is prepared, nonetheless, to allay any lingering confusion or concern.

"The challenge is that people feel nervous about it," Quinn-Carey said. "We will strive to reassure anyone who feels anxious that it is safe to participate and critical that they be counted."

"I'm pretty sure a lot of our residents are concerned about it," added Leticia Cotto, Customer Experience Officer at HPL. "Our responsibility is to get them the facts."

Census officials have reassured libraries



# Leadership

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Letica Cotto, *Customer Experience Officer*  
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Brenda Miller, *Executive Director, Culture and Communications*  
Homa Naficy, *Executive Director, The American Place*  
Gilda Roncari, *Director of Donor Relations*  
Diana Smith, *Director of Human Resources*

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Hyacinth M. Yennie

† in memoriam



## BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES TOGETHER.



At The Hartford, we're proud to partner with Hartford Public Library and our neighbors to build stronger communities together. By joining forces to focus our time, talent and resources on collaborative programs, we're all better able to enrich lives in the places we call home.

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### DOWNTOWN LIBRARY

500 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103  
860-695-6300  
Mon-Thurs: 9:30am–8pm  
Fri & Sat: 9:30am to 5pm; Sun: 1–5pm  
(Sundays: 1–5pm, November through April only)

### ALBANY LIBRARY

1250 Albany Avenue, Hartford, CT 06112  
860-695-7380  
Mon & Wed: 10am–8pm / Tues & Thurs:  
10am–6pm  
Fri & Sat: 10am–5pm

### BARBOUR LIBRARY

261 Barbour Street, Hartford, CT 06120  
860-695-7400  
Mon & Wed: 10am–6pm / Tues–Thurs:  
10am–8pm  
Fri: 10am–5pm

### CAMP FIELD LIBRARY

30 Campfield Avenue, Hartford, CT  
06114  
860-695-7440  
Mon & Wed: 10am–6pm  
Tues & Thurs: 10am–8pm  
Fri: 10am–5pm

### DWIGHT LIBRARY

7 New Park Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106  
860-695-7460  
Mon & Wed: 10am–6pm  
Tues & Thurs: 10am–8pm  
Fri: 10am–5pm

### PARK LIBRARY

744 Park Street, Hartford, CT 06106  
860-695-7500  
Mon & Wed: 10am–8pm  
Tues & Thurs: 10am–6pm  
Fri: 10am–5pm; Sat: 10am–5pm

### SAND/ROPKINS LIBRARY

1750 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06120  
860-695-7520  
Mon, Wed & Thurs: 3–6pm  
Tues: 1:30pm–6pm

### BOUNDLESS LIBRARY AT RAWSON SCHOOL

260 Holcomb Street, Hartford, CT 06112  
860-695-7481  
Tues & Thurs: 3–6pm

*Shantay Wilson creates a piece of artwork using skills learned in a four-part Introduction to Painting Workshop series held at the Camp Field Branch, May 9–June 6, and led by artist Zaigham Ali..*