

2011 Medal Winner Columbus Metropolitan Library

Speakers: Host, Dewitt Harrell & Khamall Howard

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>> HOST: The National Medal for Museum and Library Service is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exciting ways.

Columbus Metropolitan Library CFO Dewitt Harrell and community member Khamall Howard traveled to Washington to receive the national medal and spoke to IMLS about how the library impacts the community.

>> DEWITT HARRELL: As the Treasurer and Board Member for COWIC, Central Ohio Workforce Investment Corp, and the Columbus Metropolitan Library we forged a partnership to help our community with job help centers in which we help many of our members in the community get back to work.

It starts with providing abilities for them to develop resumes, to get help in terms of identifying where the job openings are and it concludes quite possibility even with the job fair where we just recently worked with the city of Columbus. There were over a thousand job seekers at our main library branch; 30 employers.

I'm proud to say this mid-November, 1,000 new jobs were identified as a result of not only our expo being an anchor but for other expos that took place throughout the city. Over a thousand of our community members got jobs.

>> KHAMALL HOWARD: I got involved actually three summers ago as a community intern. It wasn't just me working there as an intern. Once a week they had a program where they would help me. They'd do workshops because all the people in the program were high school students. They'd get us ready for doing finances for college and also they'd give us workshops on how to do a resume, things of that nature trying to get us better prepared for going out in the workforce.

And then in February they hired me as an employee so now I'm a Library Service Aid at the library and I'm still there. The main thing I do is shelve books and customer service. As I'm shelving books, if any customer has any questions on where to go in the library or a resource to the library, how to utilize it, they just ask me the question and I kind of help them.

I got into the library through the Co-Ed Program as a community intern so I try and inform other high school students if they're looking for an opportunity to work somewhere to volunteer. The library is the perfect place to do it.

>> DEWITT HARRELL: One of our three goals is to catch our youngest community members as early as possible in terms of early literacy. We have a Ready to Read Program which is an outreach program with great partnership and great support to the tune of 1.2 million.

We've been able to develop four Ready to Read Corps that go out into the community and even at different places where caregivers and parents would take kids for say medical attention or just about anywhere they go in the community we have a Ready to Read Corps that will reach out, meet with those caregivers, those parents and provide information in terms of literacy, provide books to kids who are about to enter into kindergarten and even a library card.

The goal we know from our research is that 30 to 40% of those kids are not ready for kindergarten so it's our goal to not be inside our four walls which we do extremely well in terms of books to show them but our goal is to be outside our four walls. Go out where customers are and meet these young people and more importantly education the caregivers and parents about the value and the benefits of literacy.