

2013 Medals - Marshalltown

Speakers: Sarah Rosenblum, Veronica Guevara

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>> FEMALE SPEAKER: The National Medal for Museum and Library Services is the nation's highest honor for libraries and museums that are serving their communities in exceptional ways.

Marshalltown Public Library Director Sarah Rosenblum and community member Veronica Guevara travel to Washington from Marshalltown, Iowa to receive the National Medal and spoke to IMLS about how the library impacts the community.

>> SARAH ROSENBLUM: Well the Marshalltown Public Library is in - nestled in the fields of central Iowa and it is an amazing community of 27,500 people and it has seen a huge change, a huge shift in the demographics in our community.

I think the library has really risen to the challenge of kind of bridging our older community and then our newer community which about twenty years ago really started to change dramatically. We're almost 25% Latino and now we have a growing Burmese community.

And really the library is one of the first places that these new immigrants seem to come to and we welcome that. We're thrilled that we're able to help them.

A number of our residents, you know, did not complete high school. So we have recognized that and so we offer an online database that can help them study with that. We work with the training - education and training center. We want people to be able to come to the library, better themselves so they can, you know, so they can do better. And we see a lot of that in our community.

The public library has an immense ability to change peoples' lives and improve their lives but I think in a smaller community library, we are very invested in our community and our community members.

We very - my staff knows most of our users by name. They know their children and their family and I think that we take a real interest and we want to help all of the members of our community.

>> VERONICA GUEVARA: My parents are originally from the state of Nutrika in Mexico. So I am first generation and I grew up in a household where Spanish was the primary language and actually still is.

I started working at the public library my sophomore year of high school I believe, so I was fifteen. And so I would - I worked at the library so I spent quite a bit of time there and even if I didn't work, I found it just a nice place to go and study or read and be peaceful.

So I would go to the library for that and as I got older and started going to college, I would also study there and it became kind of my study place.

>> SARAH ROSENBLUM: The March Program at the Marshalltown Public Library was started about ten or eleven years ago and it's a wonderful program in conjunction with the public school and each sixth grader comes to the library every month during the sixth grade year and they work with our Youth Services Department. We do special programs. We teach them about all of the resources. We have lots of fun. But we also want to get them at sixth grade so that they - so we can lay that foundation so that as they move into junior high and high school, that they know that there are these wonderful resources that can help them be successful.

This kind of dovetails in with lots of other projects in our community. We have a - where if kids - we know that there is scholarship assistance available for them to go to our community college. So these are all things that we want to help them or prepare them for.

>> VERONICA GUEVARA: The library helped me many different ways in my college career. I attended the community college in Marshalltown for two years and close to the end of my career there, I was very nervous about finding resources and scholarships for the university.

I asked - I remember asking just how to even go about searching for things because I wasn't really sure how to even

start looking for scholarships, and they introduced me to different scholarship books and I applied for a lot of them.

One that I remember and I can't really forget is the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Scholarship. I applied for that I think in 2011 and I received the scholarship and that kind of opened the doors to being - becoming aware of the internship.

I wasn't so sure about the chances of actually getting this internship since it was a competition on the national level and surely enough, I ended up getting that internship that I completed last fall actually and I really don't think my - I would have been able to obtain that without the library and without the library's resources and the help of the staff, so.

>> SARAH ROSENBLUM: It's that classic American story of people came over here in that first generation and they worked hard so that their children could go to college, just like Veronica. And the library plays a part in that and like - and Veronica talked about her experience of finding resources.

There are so many resources out there but so many people don't know where to turn and I think the library, we do I think a very good job of helping people get in touch with these resources.

>> VERONICA GUEVARA: The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, what they do is they bring you into Washington and they help you find a placement on the Hill, whether - mostly it is with the House but a few people end up in the Senate side and they bring you - they pay for your transportation and your housing and it's a paid internship. They just really help you network and see what D.C. life is about, so.

>> SARAH ROSENBLUM: Really for me the Medal is showcasing the work that we've done in the past and the ongoing work and getting the recognition. We are a small library. We're not a large library. We don't have a big staff but we do amazing programs. We just work really hard and it's great though to get the recognition. It's great for Iowa. We're very much part of the community and I really love that.