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Reading Public Library Recognized as a 2018 Recipient of Nation's Highest Museum and Library Honor

National Medal for Museum and Library Service Recognizes the Community Contributions of the Pennsylvania Public Library

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 1, 2018) – The Institute of Museum and Library Services today announced Reading Public Library of Pennsylvania, as one of 10 recipients of the 2018 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the nation's highest honor given to museums and libraries that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities. Over the past 24 years, the award has celebrated 182 institutions that are making a difference for individuals, families, and communities. The award will be presented at an event at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., in May.

Located in the heart of the city, the Reading Public Library is positioned to address the city's needs. It is a place of growth in five areas of literacy: Civic and Social Literacy; Health Literacy; Basic Literacy; Financial Literacy; and Informational Literacy. By continually assessing community needs, the library responds to requests for support and serves as an ally for Reading citizens.

"It is a pleasure to recognize the 10 distinctive recipients of the National Medal of Museum and Library Service," said IMLS Director Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew. "Through their programs, services, and partnerships, these institutions exemplify the many ways that libraries and museums are positively transforming communities across the nation."

Selected from 29 national finalists, the 2018 National Medal for Museum and Library Service winners represent institutions that provide dynamic programming and services that exceed expected levels of service. Through their community outreach, these institutions bring about change that touches the lives of individuals and helps communities thrive.

"I am so proud of the staff at the Reading Public Library, who go above and beyond in their service to the residents of our community," said Bronwen Gamble, Reading Public Executive Director. "Their awareness of what people want and need from their library drive our innovative programs and keep our collection relevant for the 21st century. The support of the Board of Trustees and the generosity of our funders keep us moving forward. How exciting to be one of ten winners in the United States!"

As part of the ceremony and celebration, Reading community member Luis Rodriguez will travel to Washington, D.C., with Gamble to accept the National Medal on behalf of Reading Public Library and provide a personal account of the power the library has had in the community. According to Rodriguez this library touches people of all ages and brings people back. When he was a boy, library staff nurtured his love of reading with programs designed around his interests. They provided him a high school internship that increased his skills for employment. While his love of reading brought him to this library, it was the welcome he found that kept him returning.

"Congratulations to the Reading Public Library for being awarded the National Medal for Museum and Library Services. The honor is well-deserved, as the Reading Public Library has made a commitment to providing dynamic programming and services to the residents of Berks County. I was happy to nominate the Reading Public Library for this prestigious award and look forward to hearing about the continued great work they do," said Sen. Pat Toomey.

Following the ceremony, [StoryCorps](#)—a national nonprofit dedicated to recording, preserving, and sharing the stories of Americans—will visit the Reading Public Library and provide an opportunity for community members to share stories of how this library has affected their lives. These stories are preserved at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

For a complete list of 2018 recipients and to learn more about the National Medal winners, visit <https://www.ims.gov/news-events/news-releases/ims-selects-top-10-museums-libraries-national-medal-museum-and-library>.

About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the Reading Public Library

Reading Public Library, the sixth oldest library in America, consists of a main library and three branches located in Reading, PA. More information can be found at <http://readingpubliclibrary.org/>

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