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Pierce County Library System to Receive 2013 National Medal for Museum and Library Service *National Award Recognizes Exceptional Contributions of Library System in Washington State*

WASHINGTON (April 23, 2013) – The Institute of Museum and Library Services today announced Pierce County Library System of Tacoma, Wash., as one of 10 recipients of this year’s National Medal for Museum and Library Service. The nation’s highest honor conferred on museums and libraries for service to the community, the National Medal celebrates institutions that make a difference for individuals, families, and communities. The National Medal will be presented at a celebration in Washington, D.C. on May 8.

Pierce County Library System supports an incredibly diverse community: a growing population of children, a constant influx of new residents from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, job seekers and small business owners, active older adults, and more. Through innovative programs and partnerships, rooted in and developed as a result of research, the library system has been successful in leveraging community resources and delivering high-value services. Research informed a decision to implement one of the state’s first non-Dewey Decimal libraries to increase usability. It was an immediate success – in the first four hours, 780 visitors checked out 1,566 items. The Library System’s Early Literacy Program is a flagship program. The Early Literacy staff work in many partnerships developing successful curriculum and services with organizations including the Health Department and Child Care Aware of Tacoma/Pierce County. Pierce County Library System along with community partners provide caregivers with tools and training and help children prepare for school.

“Museums and libraries serve as centers for lifelong learning and as cornerstones for our communities. Pierce County Library System is conducting their own research and implementing authentic solutions to lead the way in early literacy, support diverse constituencies, and create meaningful partnerships. We are very proud to name Pierce County Library System one of this year’s National Medal for Museum and Library Service winners,” said Susan Hildreth, director, Institute of Museum and Library Services. “This year’s National Medal recipients demonstrate the many ways museums and libraries alike build strong communities. These institutions are educating, inspiring, and leading lifelong learning while serving as community anchors.”

“I am honored and humbled. Pierce County Library is a National Medal winner thanks to our great staff and strong community partners,” said Neel Parikh, executive director for Pierce County Library System. “Our communities, staff, and partners – together, we are the award winner. With our partners, we are a valued community asset that is making a difference one person at a time.”

Jo Cruz, a local resident who uses library programs and resources to promote early literacy as a child care provider, will travel to Washington and share the impact the Pierce County Library System has had on the community during the May 8 celebration.

This year’s honorees exemplify the nation’s great diversity of libraries and museums and include a science center, children’s museum, music museum, art museum, cultural museum, public libraries, and county library systems, hailing from seven states. Earlier this year, 33 institutions were announced as finalists for the National Medal, and community members were encouraged to share their stories about their experiences on the IMLS Facebook page.

Medal winners were selected from nationwide nominations of institutions that demonstrate innovative approaches to public service, exceeding the expected levels of community outreach. After the ceremony, StoryCorps – a national nonprofit dedicated to recording, preserving, and sharing the stories of Americans – will visit Pierce County Library System to document stories from the community.

For a complete list of 2013 recipients and to learn more about the National Medal winners, please visit www.ims.gov/medals.

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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 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit <http://www.ims.gov> and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Pierce County Library System

Pierce County Library System's 18 libraries bring people together, enrich lives and provide children and adults with opportunities to learn. Pierce County Library is the largest provider of free books and information in Pierce County. The libraries offer families and children fun, learning, and numerous events to help kids read and do their homework. The Library's mission is to bring the world of information and imagination to all people of our community. To access the Library's resources, visit <http://www.piercecountylibrary.org> and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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