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## **FINALISTS ANNOUNCED FOR FIRST-EVER NYC NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY AWARDS – OVER 4,300 NEW YORKERS SUBMIT NOMINATIONS**

### **The Extraordinary Response Yields 10 Finalists – from All Five Boroughs**

**New York, NY – September 4, 2013** – The Charles H. Revson Foundation announced today the 10 finalists for the first-ever NYC Neighborhood Library Awards, which celebrate the crucial role of local libraries in serving New York City’s diverse communities. The Awards – the first of their kind to honor individual branch libraries – generated 4,310 nominations from New Yorkers. The remarkable response underscores how much city residents cherish their neighborhood libraries as a welcoming, safe community space, an essential resource for reading materials as well as Internet access, a provider of a wide variety of programs and events, and a gateway to American culture.

“These nominations reveal the passion that New Yorkers have for their neighborhood libraries,” said Julie Sandorf, President of the Charles H. Revson Foundation. “Our libraries promote and reflect the promise of our city – evening the playing field for millions of New Yorkers who seek self-improvement.”

From May 20<sup>th</sup> to July 1<sup>st</sup>, New Yorkers submitted nominations through the websites of the Brooklyn Public Library; the New York Public Library, which operates neighborhood libraries in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island; and the Queens Library. WNYC’s *Brian Lehrer Show*, the Foundation’s media partner in this initiative, provided vital radio and online coverage, helping to build awareness of the Awards and the nomination process.

The 10 finalists are now being reviewed by a panel of judges, who will decide which five will win the NYC Neighborhood Library Award and \$10,000 each. The other five will each win a secondary prize of \$5,000. The judges are: **R.L. Stine**, author of the renowned *Goosebumps* series; **Kurt Andersen**, author and host of WNYC’s *Studio 360*; **Carla Hayden**, CEO of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore and former president of the American Library Association; **Fatima Shama**, NYC Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs; and **Don Weisberg**, President of the Penguin Young Readers Group. The 10 finalists, accompanied by excerpts from nominations, are:

- **Aguilar Library** – East Harlem South (Manhattan) – “This library is an incredible resource for our family. It’s our weekly tradition to stop by and spend time browsing through the different titles. We can’t afford to buy books so this branch has become a wonderful destination.”
- **Corona Library** – North Corona (Queens) – “There is a line around the corner of neighborhood residents before the branch opens! People use it for ESOL, homework help after school, internet access, and of course access to books. It is a trusted and safe place where all folks regardless of socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds can come.”

- **Kings Bay Library** – Sheepshead Bay/Gerritsen Beach/Manhattan Beach (Brooklyn) – “I remember needing help with my resume and two of the employees went out and beyond to help me have the best resume I needed for employment. Well the following week I was hired at St. Lukes Hospital for an L.P.N. position. I am currently attending Kingsborough College and always come back to Kings Bay Library if I need help for anything.”
- **Macon Library** – Bedford-Stuyvesant/Stuyvesant Heights (Brooklyn) – “I have found this library as a safe haven and opportunity to know more about my roots. The African American Heritage Center is amazing and I feel like I’ve discovered a part of myself here.”
- **New Dorp Library** – New Dorp/Midland Beach (Staten Island) – “When we came to this country, my elder daughter was 4 years old. During her first years of school, her reading level was very low. Now my daughter is in fourth grade. This year she was the super-reader of the school. If we didn’t have the library perhaps my daughter’s progress would not be the same.”
- **Parkchester Library** – Parkchester (the Bronx) – “My library creates a welcoming environment by making me feel like I’m at home. I go to the library almost everyday, due to I don’t have internet access at home. They always willing to help with a smile. The space is wonderful, they have something for everyone, a good place to read, and relax, job postings, classes to help with resumes...”
- **Queens Village Library** – Queens Village (Queens) – “I am homebound. Not only does Queens Village send me books but they have teleconferencing calls several times a week and Skype programs. The calls allow me to meet new people, socialize and they have lectures. The isolation of the homebound is no longer a problem for me.”
- **Seward Park Library** – Lower East Side (Manhattan) – “My father reads Chinese Newspaper everyday there. The rich collection in Chinese literacy helped him a lot when he first arrived in New York from Beijing. Many of my classmates from the library’s English classes have found better jobs, got citizenships or entered college after several terms’ training.”
- **Sheepshead Bay Library** – Sheepshead Bay (Brooklyn) – “Last fall I was able to overcome my psychological stress caused by Hurricane Sandy only thanks to Sheepshead Bay Library. Those workshops helped me to come back to myself and get back to my daily routines and reality as a human being.”
- **Tremont Library** – Claremont/Bathgate (the Bronx) – “I have been coming to this branch since the age of 12 and I am 54 years of age now, and have always felt welcomed. The librarian and staff go above and beyond to help the needs of patrons.”

The 4,310 nominators most frequently identified themselves as parents, students, seniors, artists, teachers, job-seekers, and entrepreneurs. The nominations illuminated the libraries’ extraordinary dedication to serving their communities in a myriad of ways:

- Library staff members make the library feel like a second home – often greeting patrons by name as they enter and making all visitors feel valued.
- The libraries are highly attuned to the neighborhoods they serve – both in terms of the needs of residents (especially youth, seniors, and immigrants) and their cultures and languages.

- Libraries are often the only source of books and Internet in a city where 36 percent of residents – including 75 percent of residents of the NYC Housing Authority – have no broadband Internet access at home.
- The libraries play a crucial role as community centers – free and accessible to all; safe for children and for seniors; a crossroads for positive inter-generational, cross-racial, and cross-ethnic interactions. They also provide personal quiet space in a bustling city where housing is typically cramped.
- They offer a remarkable range of programs and activities – from those traditionally associated with libraries (e.g., story time for children, arts and crafts, and book clubs) to programs addressing contemporary needs (e.g., computer classes, English as a Second Language, workforce development, and tax assistance) and offerings tailored to more specific community interests (e.g., a Russian poetry club, Spanish-language film screenings, senior acting clubs, Zumba classes, exercise classes for seniors, and even belly-dancing).
- Many of those activities are potentially transformational: from preschool literacy, pre-GED training, resume-writing, and assistance with job searches to healthcare screenings, exercise classes, and citizenship test preparation.

The nominations were evaluated by Foundation staff and an independent review committee, focusing on libraries that demonstrated exceptional commitment to the needs of their respective neighborhoods. Site visits were conducted of potential finalists. The winners of the Awards will be announced on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

A recent report by the Center for an Urban Future – titled *Branches of Opportunity* and funded by the Charles H. Revson Foundation – revealed that over the past decade, circulation at New York City libraries has increased by 59 percent, program attendance by 40 percent, and program sessions by 27 percent while City funding has declined by 8 percent.

### **About the Charles H. Revson Foundation**

The Charles H. Revson Foundation, established in 1956, operates grant programs in Urban Affairs, Jewish Life, Biomedical Research, and Education. The Urban Affairs program focuses on projects that enhance New York City's vitality as a leading and livable urban capital; it continually seeks opportunities to strengthen the city's pluralistic communities and civic spaces, re-envisioning public libraries, affordable housing, and local public affairs journalism to cultivate knowledgeable, creative urban residents. The Jewish Life program operates in the United States, focusing on projects that reinterpret Jewish tradition for an ever-more-diverse community; and in Israel, where the Foundation partners with Israeli organizations to build a stronger, more inclusive society for young people. The Biomedical Research program is devoted to strengthening basic research in the biomedical sciences by awarding fellowships to exceptionally talented scientists. The Education program supports institutions and projects that seek to provide broad access to the knowledge and resources that sustain an informed and engaged citizenry.

For more information, visit the Foundation's website: <http://www.revsonfoundation.org>.