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Finalists Announced for Third Annual NYC Neighborhood Library Awards, Honoring City's Exceptional Public Libraries

A Record 19,000 Nominations Yield Ten Finalists For Shot At \$20,000 Prize

New Heckscher Foundation Award Will Recognize Library with Outstanding Children's Programming

New York, NY – April 12, 2016 – The “Oscars of libraries” announced today the ten finalists for its third awards season. The [NYC Neighborhood Library Awards](#) recognize and reward public libraries for being the unsung heroes of New York – places where all are welcome, the programs and resources are free, and the librarians are making it all happen on a shoestring budget.

A group of eminent judges will pick five winning branches for the \$20,000 prize. The remaining finalists will receive \$10,000 each. Winners will be announced in June. The awards are an initiative of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and the Charles H. Revson Foundation.

The awards generated approximately **19,000 nominations from library users**. The remarkable response – **up more than 40 percent from last year's nominations**– underscores the vital role that libraries play in our city and reveals the many ways in which libraries support New Yorkers in their daily lives.

Also, in a new twist this year, the [Heckscher Foundation for Children](#) will be awarding the *Heckscher Prize for Outstanding Service to Children and Youth* to one additional outstanding library branch that has proven their commitment to this City's youth through special programs, classes and events. The winner of this award, to be announced with the other winners at the June awards ceremony, will also receive a prize of \$20,000 to spend on their branch.

The ten finalists, accompanied by excerpts from nominations, are:

- **Aguilar Library** – East Harlem (Manhattan) – Afrah, a college graduate and lifelong neighborhood resident wrote: “Throughout high school and college, having a limited income and not being able to afford books, **this branch helped me overcome that setback**. Statistics show that I could have been a high school dropout, chances are my

life could be much worse....if it were not for my thirst of knowledge and my passion for reading, it really is hard to say what my life could have been.”

- **Arverne Library** – Arverne (Queens) –John, a neighborhood resident, husband and parent, stated: “Arverne Library goes out of their way to make us feel comfortable and the kids love going there after school. It **means a lot to us that we can send our kids somewhere we feel they are safe and the staff knows them.** We are disabled so it means a lot to us. It is like an extended family.”
- **Dyker Library**– Dyker Heights (Brooklyn) –Patricia, a library volunteer, stated: “One of the most uplifting and moving experiences I had when witnessing **a staff member patiently and kindly teach an 85 year-old man – a novice who never used a computer before – how to access the internet** and set up his very first email account. That moment is but one example exemplifying why the Dyker Branch is so valuable to this neighborhood – beyond the practical, some residents have their world opened up because of the quality of services provided there.”
- **Far Rockaway Library** – Far Rockaway (Queens) – Betty, a neighborhood resident, stated: “After Hurricane Sandy, it became a beam of light for the public. We held meetings there, we looked for jobs there, we consoled each other there, we used the internet and so many more things that others took for granted. **Since Hurricane Sandy, it has become more relevant because the employees embraced the public and a “Work Force Center” had been established at this site.** It became such a hit that it had to be moved to a larger place.”
- **Fort Washington Library** – Washington Heights (Manhattan) –A recent retiree and neighborhood resident stated: “As **a recent retiree the library is my source of helping my mind [stay] sharp and alert.** My weekly visit is something I look forward to. There are no book stores in this area of Manhattan. Access to periodicals and newly released books is a refreshing welcome.”
- **Glen Oaks Library** – Glen Oaks (Queens) – An immigrant and neighborhood resident stated: “The Queens library at Glen Oaks gave me my first taste of books. I moved to this country when I was 9 and **I learned English by checking out books after books from this library.** I have been going to this library for nearly two decades and the staff members and the services have been impeccable.”
- **Inwood Library** – Inwood (Manhattan) – Sophie, a library volunteer and parent, stated: “The Inwood Library is always involved in the community, making its programs known, catering to both English, Spanish speakers, and beyond! **When I approached the library**

about starting a new francophone toddler reading hour, the branch manager welcome me, partnered me with a tenured volunteer, and a library staff member has been working diligently to build the francophone children's section!"

- **Kings Bay Library**– Sheepshead Bay (Brooklyn) – Asya, a senior citizen and neighborhood resident stated: **“All in all, you can come to this library at opening time and leave it with the last employee, having enjoyed a useful and interesting day.** One cannot find a better remedy for depression, illness, and loneliness... I want to thank the library staff with all my heart.”
- **Morrisania Library** – South Bay (Bronx) – A parent and community group member stated: **“This library has a great computer class. I was completely computer illiterate and this library has taught me to have confidence in my new found skills.** I also like the bilingual class and parent child classes. I think this library deserves the money in every way possible.”
- **Sunset Park** – Sunset Park (Brooklyn) – Daniela, a student, immigrant, and neighborhood resident stated: **“I'm from Dominican Republic, and I moved in New York in 2008. One of the best places for me and my brother to get resources, as new residents and immigrants, was the Sunset Park Library.** Here we attended ESL classes, we used to come for computer classes and to use the internet to communicate with the rest of our family in DR. I thank God because my life can be enriched by having more learning experiences with all the books and services at the Sunset Park Library.”

The panel of judges who will select the five winning libraries include Pulitzer Prize-winning author **Stacy Schiff**; acclaimed New Yorker writer and author **Jelani Cobb**; National Book Award finalist and author **Angela Flournoy**; **Richard Reyes-Gavilan**, Executive Director for the DC Public Library and former Chief Librarian for the Brooklyn Public Library; and **Peter Hatch**, senior advisor in the De Blasio administration.

The nomination period was launched in November 2015 and ended in December. 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 at potential finalist branches.

Last year’s winners put their awards to good use. The **Langston Hughes Community Library in Queens** has added to the collections and lectures available at their Black Heritage Reference Center. **New Lots Library in Brooklyn** purchased new technology and launched an entrepreneurial series for teens. **Stapleton Library in Staten Island** is planning arts programs for adults and tech classes for students. In the Bronx, the **Parkchester Library** is adding

furniture and materials to their "Spot for Tots," and the **Mott Haven Library** is remodeling their Children's Reading Room with an interactive wall display.

About the Stavros Niarchos Foundation

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation (www.SNF.org) is one of the world's leading private international philanthropic organizations, making grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and sports, and social welfare. The Foundation funds organizations and projects that are expected to achieve a broad, lasting and positive impact for society at large, focusing on vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, and also exhibit strong leadership and sound management. The Foundation also seeks actively to support projects that facilitate the formation of public-private partnerships as an effective means for serving public welfare.

2016 marks the twentieth year of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation's global philanthropic activity. Since 1996, the SNF has made grant commitments of \$1.8 billion / €1.5 billion, through 3,358 grants to nonprofit organizations in 111 nations around the world. The Foundation's largest single gift is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), in Athens, to be completed in 2016. The project's total budget of \$831mil (€596mil) includes two grants of \$6 mil (€5mil) each to the National Library of Greece and the Greek National Opera respectively, aiming to support the organizations' transition to their new facilities. The project, designed by Renzo Piano, includes the new facilities of the National Library of Greece, and of the Greek National Opera, as well as the Stavros Niarchos Park. The SNFCC is a testament and a commitment to the country's future. It is also an engine of short- to mid-term economic stimulus.

About the Charles H. Revson Foundation

The Charles H. Revson Foundation (www.revsonfoundation.org), 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.

About the Heckscher Foundation for Children

The Heckscher Foundation (www.heckscherfoundation.org) was founded in 1921 to promote the welfare of children in the State of New York and elsewhere throughout the United States. The primary aim of the Heckscher Foundation's grantmaking is to "level the playing field" for needy youth by providing access to education and the varied experiences that make for a richer, forward-reaching life. It seeks to identify under-funded issues or projects that can provide widespread benefit, generate other engagement and funding, and then help leverage that interest to scale. The Foundation also seeks to incubate ideas and initiatives that will lead to high-impact services and improved opportunities.

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