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## **Ten Library Finalists Announced in Annual “Oscars of Libraries,” Vying for Top Honors and \$20,000 Prize**

*Record-Breaking 24,000 New Yorkers Nominated their Beloved Branches for This Year’s NYC Neighborhood Library Awards*

*New Perennial Excellence Award Launched, Recognizing Consistently Outstanding Branches Over the Years*

**New York, NY** – The Fourth Annual [NYC Neighborhood Library Awards](#), honoring the city’s exceptional public libraries, announced the ten finalists today that are poised to win a \$20,000 prize. The finalists are: **Allerton Library, Edenwald Library** and **Hunts Point Library** from the Bronx; **Queens Library at Bayside, Queens Library at Lefferts** and **Queens Library at Woodside** from Queens; **Chatham Square Library** and **George Bruce Library** from Manhattan and **Crown Heights Library** and **New Utrecht Library** from Brooklyn.

Known as the “Oscars of Libraries,” the NYC Neighborhood Library Awards recognizes and rewards public libraries for being irreplaceable pillars of their communities, offering a welcoming and safe environment, and free programs and services – all while on a tight budget. The awards, an initiative of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation and the Charles H. Revson Foundation, will culminate in an announcement of the winners in October. A panel of judges will select the top five winners for a \$20,000 prize and the remaining finalists will receive \$10,000.

This year, an outpouring of library love amounted to a **record-breaking 24,000 nominations for the awards, an increase of more than 30 percent from last year**. New Yorkers from all five boroughs wrote about their appreciation for local libraries, including heartwarming stories about librarians who went the extra mile, made patrons feel like family members, and helped people improve their lives. Many patrons shared how they’ve been going to their local libraries since childhood and are now bringing their children, while others shared how libraries were their first stop after immigrating to the U.S., providing vital English classes, books, and job readiness skills.

Due to an overwhelmingly positive response from patrons, the NYC Neighborhood Library Awards added the new Perennial Excellence Award to recognize libraries that have been consistently stellar over the years. Returning for its second year, the Heckscher Foundation for Children will once again award the *Heckscher Prize for Outstanding Service to Children and Youth* to one additional library branch that has proven their commitment to this City’s youth through special programs, classes, and events. The winner of this award will also receive a prize of \$20,000 to spend on their branch.

One common theme in the nominations this year was the outstanding programming and services neighborhood branches provide in the face of serious maintenance and infrastructure challenges from chronic roof leaks to faulty air conditioners to inaccessible spaces. This year’s finalists’ capital needs total more than \$40.7 million, including \$2.4 million for Allerton Library, \$9 million for Edenwald Library, \$13.2 million for Queens Library at Bayside, \$905,000 for Queens Library at

Lefferts, \$7.2 million for Queens Library at Woodside, \$3 million for Chatham Square Library, \$67,500 for George Bruce Library and \$4.9 million for Crown Heights Library.

Below are the 10 finalists, accompanied by excerpts from nominations:

- **Allerton Library** (Allerton, Bronx) – One teen wrote about BridgeUp, an afterschool program for high school students: “For once **I felt a part of something** ... the library has helped me find myself with well-thought out activities and programs.”
- **Queens Library at Bayside** (Bayside, Queens) – Lifelong patron Daniela stated: “My mother would bring my siblings and I multiple times a week for programs and activities that have had a tremendous impact on my life. It not only **made me realize what a love I have for literature and the arts**, but helped me socialize as a shy child with a diverse and kind population. **Now, 24 years later, I am welcomed as more than just a community member, but a family member.**”
- **Chatham Square Library** (Chinatown, Manhattan) – Teri, an immigrant and former neighborhood resident stated: “This is the library I have been going to since I was 10 years old as a new immigrant without knowing any English. At first, it was a resource center for Chinese language books, newspaper and magazines for me and my family. Now, I am a parent with 2 young children and **I have come full circle to return to this library to get Chinese books to teach my kids Chinese language**. Without this library, I wouldn't have retained my Chinese language, nor improved my English.”
- **Crown Heights Library** (Crown Heights, Brooklyn) – 13-year-old Sara shared: “I have been coming to the Crown Heights Library since I was seven years old. **This library is my favorite place**, where I can come anytime and in any mood and always find something to cheer me up and make me happy. **This library is shaping who I am**, and I truly don't know who I'd be without it.”
- **Edenwald Library** (Edenwald, Bronx) – A neighborhood resident, immigrant and library staff member wrote: “**This library has transformed my life**. As immigrants to America, the library meant everything to us. I polished my reading and writing skills at the library. The library filled in all the gaps and helped me greatly. I landed a job with the library. Got a scholarship to go for my Masters at St. Johns University. My neighborhood library made all this possible.”
- **George Bruce Library** (Morningside Heights, Manhattan) – Mara, a parent, stated: “From story hour to open play to art classes to readings with authors and illustrators, the library staff goes above and beyond to help instill a love of reading and books in the children that utilize the library...By partnering with places like the Studio Museum, the **George Bruce Library brings art based programming to children who might not be able to access it elsewhere**. Private enrichment and art classes for children are incredibly expensive, the GB Library ensures that **any child in our neighborhood can participate** in unique and robust programs for free!”
- **Hunts Point Library** (Hunts Point, Bronx) – Larry, a lifelong patron, shared: “The library has **always been a second home to me**. A place where I could actually visit almost seven days a week that was **a safe haven for me as a child, an adult and now a parent**...This

library is strong on tutoring and educational development...I love the Hunts Points Library and so does my entire community.”

- **Queens Library at Lefferts** (Richmond Hill, Queens) – A neighborhood patron shared: “For 20 years I have been coming to this library. I feel safe here, and with Unchained [LGBTQ] support meetings **I now have a safe space to be myself.**”
- **New Utrecht Library** (New Utrecht, Brooklyn) – Library volunteer, neighborhood resident, parent and retiree Sonia stated: “In keeping with the times, our library has skillfully adapted to the change in demographics by modifying and adding events, classes and programs to embrace our new residents. The New Utrecht Library has **provided an educational and welcoming space for cultural exchanges.** New Utrecht Library has **truly brought our diversified community together** as one.”
- **Queens Library at Woodside** (Woodside, Queens) – Bob, a neighborhood patron stated: “One day I saw a patron in a wheelchair in tears because the elevator was out of order and she couldn't get to the second floor to attend the Korean Class. When the staff found this out, they immediately discussed it with the Korean teacher and **suggested to move the class to the ground floor so the person in a wheelchair could attend the class.** It shows that the staff there really care for their patrons.”

Nominations were open from February to March of this year. Based on patrons’ nominations, data on circulation and program attendance, visits to see the branches in action, and the recommendations of a philanthropic review committee, the pool was narrowed down to ten finalists.

Last year’s winners have already put their winnings to good use. In Queens, **Glen Oaks Library** purchased furniture and sewing machines while the **Arverne Library** refreshed the children’s book collection, hosted a series of Zumba exercise programs and holiday workshops and purchased new test preparation books. **Sunset Park Library** in Brooklyn purchased art and music equipment for their children’s programming and **Inwood Library** in Manhattan added new charging stations, book bins, and a media cart. In the Bronx, **Morrisania Library** plans to add four new computers, a new television set for library programming, and several gaming consoles, and **Jerome Park Library** will purchase new seating, replace old shelving in the children’s section, and expand hands-on programming for children.

This year’s winning branches will be selected by a panel of judges including acclaimed authors **Francine Prose, Min Jin Lee, and Eric Klinenberg**; Executive Director of the National Book Foundation **Lisa Lucas**; and Commissioner & CEO of Chicago Public Library **Brian Bannon**.

### **About the Stavros Niarchos Foundation**

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation ([www.SNF.org](http://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. Since 1996, the SNF has made grant commitments of \$1.9 billion, through 3,808 grants to nonprofit organizations in 113 nations around the world. 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.

In addition, the SNF continues to respond to the urgent needs of the Greek society, aiming to provide relief against the severe effects of the socioeconomic crisis, through three major grant initiatives totaling \$378 million.

The Foundation's largest single gift is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC), in Athens, amounting to a total cost of \$861 million. The SNFCC, designed by the renowned architectural firm Renzo Piano Building Workshop, includes the new facilities of the National Library of Greece, and of the Greek National Opera, as well as the Stavros Niarchos Park and was delivered to the Greek Society on February 23rd, 2017. Moreover the SNF has announced its commitment to continue to support the SNFCC for the next five years, through grants totaling up to \$53 million for the implementation of free programming and operational costs of the organization. All events funded with the SNF's support are open and accessible to all.

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

The Charles H. Revson Foundation ([www.revsonfoundation.org](http://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](http://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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