A Message From
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dear Friends,

I am honored to serve as President of the Library Board of Trustees during this special time in our history. Our library was recognized in 2017 as a winner of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

This honor is a direct reflection of the amazing work happening at our library every single day. It is work that is necessary to help meet the needs of a growing and changing community.

Our library saw over 600,000 visits this year from people who were looking for help, seeking job search assistance, learning new life skills, meeting with friends or coworkers, finding entertainment, or demonstrating to their children the value of literacy. Our community read over 2.5 million minutes during the 2017 Summer Dare, making it our most successful summer learning program yet. The library continues to be a place of safety and connection, bringing people together to explore and discover themselves and the world beyond our doors.

This has been a wonderful year at the Cedar Rapids Public Library and for our entire community. I look forward to where we go from here. I hope you will join us on the journey.

Harriet Kalinsky
President, Board of Trustees
Cedar Rapids Public Library

Cedar Rapids Public Library Board of Trustees FY 2017

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Director's Letter

Dear Friends,

In 2017, Cedar Rapids Public Library was named one of the best libraries in the country by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This is an amazing accomplishment and one that should make each member of our community proud. The reason for the recognition lies in the fact that our library is a community-centered library driven by the needs of those we serve.

We were recognized for the innovative programs like the award-winning Summer Dare Everywhere, which brings our summer learning program into childcare centers to provide library service to kids who have barriers to access. Most of these kids have never participated in a story time or summer reading program before.

We were also recognized for MICRO—a micro lending program which is a partnership with the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, the City of Cedar Rapids, the Small Business Development Center, and the East Central Iowa Council of Governments. MICRO offers individuals the opportunity to start a small business and our librarians work with prospective borrowers to help write business plans, identify market possibility, and prepare for the steps they must take to qualify for a loan.

And lastly, we were recognized for the daily work that happens to provide our most vulnerable citizens with access to the resources they desperately need: time on a public computer, help writing a resume or filling out an online job application, space for family gatherings, books to learn that new life skill or to prepare a young learner for school, and so much more.

Libraries serve and elevate communities. Winning the National Medal for Museum and Library Service shines a spotlight on the work we do and allows our community and our nation to celebrate with us the power of the public library.

We are so thankful for our city leaders and community partners who allow us to enhance and amplify their great work.

We have so much to be thankful for this year, but more than anything it is the amazing staff and volunteers who make our Library the National Medal award winning library that it is. Thank you for supporting us as we continue to serve our community and demonstrate to the world all that Cedar Rapids has to offer.

Dara Schmidt
Director
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Tara Carrera-Bauer is a Children’s Librarian at the Cedar Rapids Public Library. Tracy brings her play group to see Tara at Story Time during the week so they can experience the activities, stories, and rhymes that help prepare them to be readers. Tara adds activities to help get the wiggles out for little ones and keep them engaged during her story times. She chooses interactive books and include rhymes that parents and caregivers can repeat at home. Her goal is to get parents engaging with their children more, as well as understanding why what they’re doing is important to their child’s development.

Reading and playing with children are crucial to helping them develop early literacy skills that are the foundation for their future success in school and their later lives. The American Academy of Pediatrics summarized research that shows that children whose parents and caregivers invest time in playing with them interactively are more likely to have better social-emotional skills, be more creative, and more resilient to stress as compared with children who are not provided with interactive play time.

It’s never too early to start reading with your child! The Library has a wonderful collection of board books, many of which are developmentally appropriate for infants and toddlers.
Christina

“I actually use the library very regularly. My goal has been to get there at least once a week. I was pretty consistent when my kids were little, but they are both teenagers now so I go on my own more often than with kids these days. I thought the Spark Kit was an incredible way to allow folks without the means that I have the opportunity to ‘try a hobby’ with minimal investment. My daughter and I did just grab a book off the banned books display, and she got the luxury of re-reading Roald Dahl’s James and the Giant Peach, reinvigorating her love for that author.”

Spark Kits

The Cedar Rapids Public Library has an amazing collection of books that help our patrons learn to try new experiences. Whether that’s through arts, crafts, or fitness, just about anything we have something to get you started. In 2017, the staff decided to improve access to new hobbies, skills, and activities by creating Spark Kits. Spark Kits are small kits filled with all the supplies you need to get started learning something new. First came crochet and coloring kits. Now patrons can check out sewing and fitness kits. Patrons, like Christina Littler pictured here, love them! Our small collection of Spark Kits have circulated nearly 70 times in the first year. And we aren’t stopping here! We have big plans for the future to add Spark Kits for bird watching, wool spinning, and fitness balls.”
The Cedar Rapids Public Library’s Summer Dare Everywhere delivers the library’s summer reading program to underserved youth with barriers to accessing library resources and programs. Through partnerships with childcare providers, the library extends its literacy efforts beyond its physical boundaries and engages volunteers in supporting reading initiatives in the community. In 2016, the Cedar Rapids Public Library was involved in discussions with childcare providers to develop solutions to combat the summer learning slide. Providers identified shortages in new, engaging reading materials and staff time as the biggest challenges to supporting youth in reading programs at their care sites. In response to these needs, the library launched a summer reading program to bring library resources and volunteers to support the literacy efforts at these childcare sites. Each week during the summer, volunteers host a 90-minute program at several childcare sites. They bring a wealth of library resources: books, crafts, and learning tablets. A deposit collection curated by library staff circulates through the sites, and volunteers fulfill specific book requests for the children. The program capitalizes on the strengths of each player – partnerships with childcare providers, library staff collection and programming expertise, and the volunteers’ engagement and gift of time. In 2016, the program started with two sites and 130 children. In 2017, it grew by 200% to 260 children at five sites. Based on a 2016 survey, 68% of participants had not previously participated in the summer reading program. The innovative impact of the program is its ability to economically expand the library’s capacity to reach children with barriers to library access and provide them with a unique library experience at their childcare site.

Karl Green has been a familiar face at the Cedar Rapids Public Library for over four decades. Karl has been writing as a hobby for 25 years, and his work has appeared in 17 publications. He credits the library for keeping him inspired and always being able to provide an interesting answer to every question he has asked. In 2015, Karl decided he wanted to start giving back to the library that has been like a second home to him for so many years. He now volunteers alongside the staff for several hours each week. Karl helps find materials patrons have put on hold, assists at large community events like the Renaissance Faire, and tidies up his adopted books in the new arrivals section of the Adult Non-Fiction collection. Karl is a valued member of the library team; his hard work ethic is only surpassed by his good nature and ability to share just the right joke that will brighten everyone’s day – whether it’s another volunteer, patron, or staff member.

AmeriCorps VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America), like Kat Thompson pictured here, were an integral part in the growth of the Summer Dare Everywhere. Each of our six VISTAs partnered with volunteers to oversee the program at childcare sites, organize library materials with the help of Library staff, and facilitate the Summer Dare program. They also assisted with programs held both inside the Library and at other off-site locations throughout the summer.
The Library is proud to partner with several local high schools through its Young Adult (YA) Job Coach program. The YA Job Coach program works with special education teachers and students to develop volunteer opportunities for the students at the Library. These students support the Library while gaining the specific on-the-job experience and tools necessary to succeed in the workplace.

With three tiers of roles to choose from, ranging from dusting shelves to shelving returning YA Fiction books, these volunteer opportunities allow educators to select the appropriate role for each student based on his/her abilities. Students can also grow into new roles as they become more independent. Since the program started, the Library has worked with over 40 students that have volunteered over 1,400 hours. These incredible young men and women are a valuable part of our Library team, and we enjoy seeing them here each week!