NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY MULTICULTURAL PROGRAM AWARD

New Jersey is a multicultural state.

The long-lasting influx of international immigrants has shaped the state's racial and ethnic composition. Every neighborhood has a different mix of nationalities and languages. Today's libraries are constantly challenged by their diverse communities.

The Multicultural Program Award was established in 2014 to recognize library programs that increase understanding and promote diversity and multiculturalism in New Jersey's libraries. Libraries are encouraged to develop long-term partnerships with community organizations that result in sustainable cultural programming. The ultimate goal of the program is to share the library's program as a model for inspiration and adaptation by other libraries.

2014 EDITION

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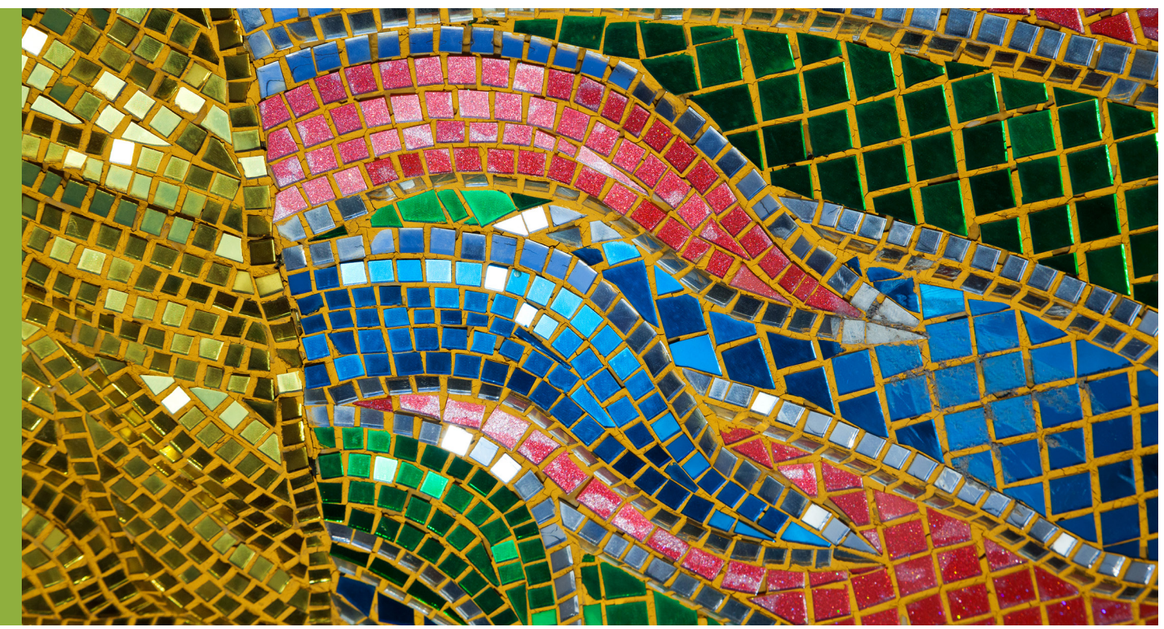
New Jersey State Library

MULTICULTURAL PROGRAM AWARD

NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY



Connecting people with information through libraries

NJ State Library
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RUNNERS-UP

LOS AMIGOS ESL CLUB | The Plainfield Public Library

Los Amigos ESL Club is a weekly multicultural program that grew out of the Plainfield Public Library's Adult Literacy/English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The program was created in 2007 by the library's ESL coordinator, Colombian-born Luz "Stella" Segura, for the purpose of helping her fellow students get together outside of the classroom to practice their English skills in a more casual social setting. All of its members are non-native English speakers and hail from over 10 different nations.

Los Amigos ESL Club originally met at the library, but now meets off-site. Although most members still attend ESL classes, they are more relaxed and confident in the casual social setting of the Los Amigos Club. The club celebrates American and foreign holidays, often with traditional ethnic foods. The Los Amigos ESL Club model has been formally presented to other local literacy groups at the annual meeting of Literacy Volunteers of New Jersey. Here the program's impact was so great that it has now been replicated by other programs seeking to add value to their ESL programs. Visitors come from other libraries and literacy programs to see, first-hand, how members interact and how it is different from the classroom experience.

Other businesses have gotten involved: PNC Bank hosts Saturday Citizenship-prep classes, and Graphix One, a local print shop, has donated name badges for the members of the Literacy Advisory Council. Other local agencies, such as the Child Advocacy Resource Association (Hispanic Foster Care), Somerset Medical Center, and HOPES Community Action Partnership send speakers to the Los Amigos ESL Club meetings to share information on health and social services.

DIA! MANY CHILDREN, MANY CULTURES, MANY BOOKS
The Clifton Public Library

Clifton is the most diverse community in New Jersey with over 50 percent of the population speaking a language other than English at home, and there are over 60 languages spoken in the Clifton Public Schools.

The first DIA! (day in Spanish) celebration was held in April 2012. It was an entire day of activities, including multicultural crafts; multilingual story times (where community representatives such as police officers read in their native language); an English-Spanish puppet show; a world map for children to mark their country of origin; and an African clay mask workshop. In 2013 we broadened our cultural spectrum, bringing people and shows from more cultures. In addition, we collaborated with local restaurants, adding ethnic food tasting. This time, more than 600 people attended.

The success came because the library acknowledged and celebrated the city's cultural diversity, helping people feel part of the library. The staff's enthusiasm and involvement played an important role, as well. The community involvement has included patrons, police officers and firefighters, and community organizations, as well as local restaurants.

"We would like to take the program to the next step, including spearheading a city-wide week of celebrations, involving the entire municipality. We also want to transform DIA! into a yearlong celebration," said Gloria Abero, project manager, DIA! & children's librarian supervisor, Clifton Public Library.

MULTICULTURAL MATTERS, DIVERSITY PRICELESS

MARY L. CHUTE
State Librarian of New Jersey

The Multicultural Program Award was developed to recognize those hard-working public libraries and their staffs in laying out the groundwork for successful cultural community coalition-building and carefully targeted cultural programming. It also renews the State Library's commitment to helping public libraries engage their cultural and ethnic communities in meaningful and effective partnerships to better serve all New Jerseyans.

New Jersey's population has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Latinos comprise the largest ethnic group in New Jersey. Asians are the fastest growing racial group; increased by 51 percent within the past decade. Over one in five residents of New Jersey are foreign born.

New Jersey is home to more scientists and engineers per square mile than any other area of the world. It's also one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse states in the U.S., with the second largest Jewish population (after New York), the second largest Muslim population (after Michigan), the largest population of Peruvians in the country, and the largest population of Cubans outside of Florida. It also boasts very high numbers of Portuguese and Brazilian Americans, Hispanics, Arabs, African-Americans, Asians, Chinese and Italian-Americans.

In response to these rapidly changing demographics, New Jersey's public libraries have tried to adapt their local services and programming accordingly. They have sometimes struggled, since replicable ethnic or cultural programming was not widely available in New Jersey's public libraries; also many underserved ethnic communities are not aware of, or do not use, their local public library.

I proudly salute the winners of our first annual Multicultural Program Award. These winning libraries and runners-up chose to navigate the challenges of developing their partnerships and delivered comprehensive cultural programming and promotion to their communities. They have successfully demonstrated their commitment to working with partners in their neighborhoods for the benefit of the entire community that resulted in sustainable cultural programming. These programs are exceptional examples of taking the library's conventional programming to a new level.

Congratulations!

2014 WINNING LIBRARIES

of the NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY MULTICULTURAL PROGRAM AWARD

AFRICAN-AMERICAN FAMILY REUNIONS, HISTORY & GENEALOGY | The Ocean County Library

It has historically been difficult for African-Americans to find and utilize traditional genealogical resources for research. This two-part program, one for the public and one for the staff, aided both in best methods and resources in conducting African-American genealogical research. Expert panel discussion; tours of the library's local history collection, including online materials; and making a connection with the African-American Genealogical Society of New Jersey led to the success of the public program. For the staff workshop, along with the guest experts, staff members who had planned family reunions and staff members who had begun genealogical research on African-Americans in their lineage were included. This was valuable on an interpersonal level allowing staff to relate their own personal experiences.

The finest explanation of how we have partnered with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and what that partnership has meant to the African-American community in Ocean County, is best described in a quote from Bahiyyah Abdullah, president of the Toms River Chapter NAACP. "We have had the opportunity to partner with the Ocean County Library System for the last 10 years. During that time we have been able to co-host annual February African-American History month programs, as well as partnering on Juneteenth celebrations in June. We have also co-sponsored important programs about the Freedom Riders, Zora Neale Hurston and African-American genealogy. Most importantly, the NAACP has served as a resource for the library with the African-American community. This collaboration has enabled us to join together

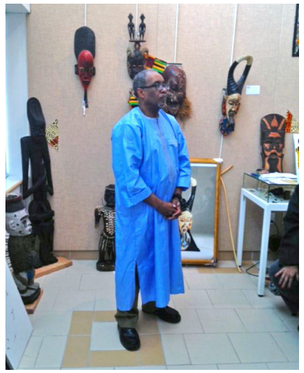
to educate the whole community about the African-American experience, as well as to educate the African-American community about the resources that the library has to offer. The Toms River Area Branch NAACP deeply appreciates the relationship we have developed with the library because of the support they have given us through the years for our Annual Freedom Fund Banquet, use of library space for events and staff resources. As partners we have built a lasting bridge between the African-American community and the library."

The Ocean County Library finds partnering with the community on this type of program rewarding for both the staff and the community group. Our mission is "Connecting People, Building Community, Transforming Lives" and our diversity-focused programs are one example of how we live that mission every day. •

AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN NEW JERSEY - A CELEBRATION | The Willingboro Public Library

In Willingboro, we have a large and growing number of African immigrants, mainly from Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Sierra Leone. In efforts to make African immigrants feel welcome at the library and providing outreach to them, the Willingboro Public Library formed an African Advisory Board with representation of the main African groups in the community. Some library staff serve as ex-officio to the board. With a grant from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, and the African Advisory Board working side by side, we organized the ongoing program, *African Immigrants in New Jersey – a Celebration*. This series covers lectures, an art exhibit, a movie screening and a cultural festival. The programs were chosen to explore the true state of African immigrant relations; create an environment of cross cultural understanding between African immigrants and other groups; and eliminate stereotyping.

As a result, these programs have brought the African immigrants and African-American communities together in celebration of their common heritage and achievements. It also provided a unique opportunity for African immigrants to share their experiences with immigrants from other countries and with their American neighbors. For example, Robert House, a U.S. native and resident of Willingboro, shared his extensive collection of African art.



This series had created awareness of the African immigrant group, helping to dispel some of the rumors and myths about Africans and opening avenues for dialogue. Working and learning together has brought many of our customers together.

Involving the African immigrants through the African Advisory Board in the program planning process was essential to the program's success. We also worked closely with a number of community groups including the Links, who sponsor our African Heritage Film Festival, and local businesses and churches. We found that sharing information through word-of-mouth, publicity in areas where these groups meet and by social media was also a key. •

THE BIG READ | The Monmouth County Library

The program was *The Big Read* featuring *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines. It deals with racism, capital punishment and an unequal justice system. In partnership with Brookdale Community College, the library contributed about 24 events that included lectures on life in the segregated south and capital punishment; a documentary about Japanese-Americans in the internment camps; and screening of *The Central Park Five*. The library also hosted book discussions dealing with racism, genocide, Native American issues, Latin-American history and violence against women. With such a passionate response to this series, the library extended it beyond *The Big Read* into May with a documentary on the Nanking atrocities in which Japanese soldiers and Chinese survivors discussed their experiences.

The library worked with Brookdale's Center for Holocaust, Human Rights and Genocide Education, and also partnered with schools, churches, our local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People, and the Alliance for Preserving the History of World War II in Asia. The library staff researched community partners and constructed the events to appeal to many different communities. As a result, the community reacted well to these programs. The patrons went to several events and brought what they had learned about other cultural injustices and history to other programs. People were also able to connect their personal histories to the stories of other people. They were encouraged to speak and ask questions in the programs, so instead of a one-way presentation, these events fostered continuing and expanding dialogues among groups.

The library was able to create an on-going dialogue that went both broader and deeper by expanding it beyond *A Lesson Before Dying* to illuminate other examples of social injustice. It led people to want to attend many programs to learn and share what they now knew about different events and cultures.

"Our relationship with our patrons is strong and I also believe that is one of the reasons for our success," concluded Donna Mansfield, project manager, The Big Read & programming coordinator, Monmouth County Library. •