

PUBLIC RECEPTION FOR IMLS AWARD
October 26, 2008

Good afternoon. I am Carolyn Anthony, Director of the Skokie Public Library. I would like to extend a hearty welcome to Skokie Mayor George VanDusen, to other Village officials and distinguished guests and to you residents of Skokie. Thank you all for attending this celebration of Skokie Public Library's receipt of the 2008 National Medal for Museum and Library Service from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services. We are indeed honored to have been selected as one of five libraries in the nation this year to receive the National Medal for "making a difference in the community we serve." To me, this is the bottom line of what we are all about, the reason we work seven days a week to provide opportunities for people in Skokie to learn from cradle to advanced senior years, both from resources collected for your use and from opportunities to attend programs and to interact with each other.

Helping to "make the community a better place to live" as IMLS Director Anne-Imelde Radice phrased it in her remarks at the award ceremony in Washington does not happen as a result of erecting an attractive library building or even as a result of assembling a first rate collection of library materials although we certainly have done both here in Skokie. The Library has contributed to the quality of life in Skokie through thousands of connections with people. This award recognizes the staff of the Skokie Public Library who provide caring and excellent service 359 days a year. Would staff members who are present please raise your hand so that we can all congratulate you and thank you for your outstanding service? I need to call out a couple staff who made particular contributions in regard to this award. Our Associate Director Barbara Kozlowski prepared the initial award nomination. Christie Robinson, Manager of Public Information and Programs, also worked on the nomination and she worked with the staff at IMLS to provide the information and photos they needed to prepare the booklet about the award winners as well as the video produced by the History Channel. My assistant Susan Dickens responded to numerous emails and coordinated arrangements for our trip to Washington. Dawn Wlezien worked with Christie Robinson to prepare this reception. Special thanks to you all.

This award also recognizes the vision and dedication of the Board of Library Trustees, the elected officials who oversee the Library, shape policies, and ensure that funds are sufficient and appropriately allocated to carry out the Library's mission. Board members are wearing boutonnieres, but if they would raise their hands at this time, I would like you all to recognize them. This award truly would not have been possible without the Board's consistent support and clear insight into the Library's role in the community.

No matter how hard Library staff and Board worked, we could not have achieved this award in isolation. To be effective, we have formed partnerships with many agencies in the community. You would not want to stand here long enough for me to mention them all and my apologies for those not named. Please see the banner behind the Circulation Desk for a listing of partner agencies. However, I would like to ask for anyone here from some of our community partners to raise your hand as I mention the name of your agency and please keep your hand up: The Village of Skokie, the Skokie Park District, Niles Township District 219, local public and private schools, Oakton Community College, Skokie Chamber of Commerce, Rush North Shore Medical Center, Skokie Historical Society, United Way Northwest Suburban, ColeTaylor Bank, Westfield Old Orchard Shopping Center, Metropolitan Family Services, the Music Institute of Chicago, Turning Point Behavioral Health Care Center, Gandhi Memorial Trust Fund, Chicago YIVO Society, Coalition of Asian American Communities of Skokie, Independent Merchants of Downtown Skokie, Jewish Vocational Service, Keumsil Cultural Society. And there are more! It really does take a Village! Thank you all for working with us in service to Skokie. It is truly because of the extraordinary cooperation among service providers in Skokie that the Library is able to be so effective.

The Library was recognized for "embracing the diversity of its constituency" and for "targeting and tailoring its programming to the many and varied populations it serves." We take pride in having been a founding sponsor and continuing co-sponsor of the Skokie Festival of Cultures which has grown over 18 years to represent 31 different cultures. The Library has collections in 20 world languages and features programs and exhibits representing various cultures. It was appropriate that Board Vice President John Graham and I were accompanied to Washington

by Aleks Krapivkin, a sophomore at Niles West who immigrated from Ukraine to the U.S. with his mother, sister and grandparents 4.5 years ago. Aleks was an excellent representative for Skokie, speaking in clear English about the ways the Skokie Public Library helped him and his family make the transition to life here in Illinois.

The Library's Skokie Accessible Library Services or SALS program which has extended library services to persons who are visually or hearing impaired, and the Young Steinway Concert Series for young, pre-professional musicians were two other Library programs singled out for notice by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The award ceremony at the White House was lovely and memorable. First Lady Laura Bush is truly gracious. Arrangements, from the military representatives in dress uniform to the splendid reception in the State Dining Room, made us all feel special.

Before concluding these remarks, I need to thank one more group and that is all of you residents of Skokie. You have supported the Library without fail, both through payment of taxes for Library operations and building expansion and through continuing use of the Library. Consistently, more than 65,000 people per month come to the Library to check out books and films, attend a program, use a computer, consult with a librarian or otherwise make use of the facility as a place to discover and learn. It is a real joy for those of us who work here to offer services to such an appreciative public, hungry for knowledge. Thank you for inspiring us!

You came here today to celebrate, not to listen to speeches, so thank you for indulging me in these remarks. I hope you have all had a chance to listen to the music of Sisai from the Andes, to take a tour, to see the film by the History Channel about the award-winners and to enjoy some refreshments. There will be time for further refreshment and socializing after some other people have been introduced.

It is my pleasure to introduce the President of the Board of Library Trustees Diana Hunter, whose dedication is apparent in her 39 years of service on the Library Board.