

City of Lewiston Press Statement

Lewiston Public Library Receives \$121,846

National Endowment for the Humanities Grant

July 13, 2020

LEWISTON: **The Lewiston Public Library has been selected as one of six Maine cultural organizations to receive grant funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to retain employees and help pay for essential operations during the COVID pandemic through the CARES Act.** The Library applied for the grant on May 11th following City Council approval on May 5th to do so.

To be selected is quite a testament to the Library, as for the highly competitive NEH CARES grant category, the Humanities Endowment received more than 2,300 eligible applications from cultural organizations requesting more than \$370 million in funding for projects between June and December 2020. Approximately 14 percent of the applicants were funded. These 317 grants will allow cultural organizations to retain staff to preserve and curate humanities collections, advance humanities research, and maintain buildings and core operations.

The Lewiston Public Library will receive \$121,846. Funding will go towards the youth library program, **“Where You Are,”** as well as salaries for two full-time Children’s staff and four part-time Children’s staff through the end of December 2020.

The **“Youth Library Where You Are”** program will expand Library digital offerings, increase virtual programming by staff and presenters, and convert its existing BookReach program to a virtual format. The Summer Reading Program will be offered in app form and through to-go program kits and book giveaways. Programming will also extend beyond virtual, including StoryWalks installed throughout the community, craft and activity kits mailed to families along with print newsletters supporting humanities learning. This program will also address the digital divide in literacy opportunities by purchasing a number of digital learning devices to circulate to families.

The program will be managed by Library Director Marcela Peres and Children’s Librarian Sara Groves. Program details will be announced at lponline.org and on the Library’s social media sites as they are developed.

Director Peres notes, **“We are excited and honored to receive this funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. For over a century, the Lewiston Public Library has worked to foster a love of reading, learning, and community both in and out of our building. This grant will allow us to bring the Library to Lewiston’s families and ensures that we can continue this important work by helping local youth through these challenging times.”**

A total of \$731,189 will be distributed, and other recipients are the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay; Bowdoin College in Brunswick; The Monhegan Museum; the Northeast Historic Film in Bucksport; and the Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport.

Senator Susan Collins, Senator Angus King, and Congressman Jared Golden issued a joint statement in celebration of Lewiston’s grant award, **“For decades, Lewiston Public Library has provided an educational space for students to learn, collaborate, and strengthen their reading skills. As the coronavirus pandemic disrupts our daily lives and routines, it’s vital that LPL is still able to provide these services to youth in the region. As distance learning has left many students without access to additional literary support, this investment from NEH will help Lewiston Public Library bridge this digital divide by shifting more of their services online to help our students succeed.”**

In-person youth programming at the Lewiston Public Library will likely be one of the last services to return, given challenges of ensuring safe social distancing among children. Staff continues to adapt programming to remote models, many virtual. Others, recognizing the barriers to technology access in Lewiston as well as screen fatigue, will support literacy education by low-tech methods.

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created in 1965. It is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States. The NEH promotes excellence in the humanities and conveys the lessons of history. The endowment accomplishes this mission by awarding grants for top-rated proposals examined by panels of independent, external reviewers. NEH grants typically go to cultural institutions, such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television & radio stations, and to individual scholars. The grants strengthen teaching and learning in schools and colleges; facilitate research and original scholarship; provide opportunities for lifelong learning; preserve and provide access to cultural and educational resources; and strengthen the institutional base of the humanities.

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