



PRESS RELEASE

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Editor: Please do not edit out ALA credit in the last paragraph.

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KNOXVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY RECEIVES NATIONAL GRANT FOR SMALL AND RURAL LIBRARIES \$3,000 Grant Will Help Promote Lifelong Learning and Celebrate Diversity

Knoxville, Iowa — The Knoxville Public Library has been selected as one of 200 libraries to participate in Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries, an American Library Association (ALA) initiative that helps library workers better serve their small and rural communities.

The competitive award comes with a \$3,000 grant that will help the library spearhead a county-wide Community Read in Marion County. All five libraries (Pella, Knoxville, Melcher-Dallas, Bussey, and Pleasantville) will participate in reading and promoting activities related to diverse cultures and inclusion.

“We are so proud to be chosen for this amazing opportunity,” said Library Director Thompson. “This grant will allow our library to get to know our residents better and help us build a happier and healthier community for our families. I am very proud that it’s going to be a county-wide endeavor.”

As part of the grant, the staff will take an online course in how to lead conversations, a skill vital to library work today. Staff will then host conversations and activities with residents about embracing diverse cultures and inclusivity. Part of the grant funds will be used to purchase multiple sets of the book, We the Interwoven: An Anthology of Bicultural Iowa for book discussion, hosting a writer’s panel, and a series of programs, yet to be determined. Programming may be in-person, virtual, or both in the coming months.

Marion County is quite homogenous (96.1% white), but in the past few years, has seen an influx of immigrants enter the schools or workforce. The Hispanic and Latino community has almost tripled, and Pella has seen a significant increase in people who claim Asian heritage. It is important that they feel welcomed in their communities and libraries play an important role as one of the first welcoming places for new residents to visit. The Knoxville Public Library has hosted a Lifelong Learning series for the past 5 years.

If you are interested in getting involved or taking part in the conversation, please contact your local librarian. In Knoxville, call 641-828-0585 or visit www.knoxville.lib.ia.us for more information.

More than 300 libraries applied for the grant, according to ALA.



Since 2014, ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities initiative has re-imagined the role libraries play in supporting communities. Libraries of all types have utilized free dialogue and deliberation training and resources to lead community and campus forums; take part in anti-violence activities; provide a space for residents to come together and discuss challenging topics; and have productive conversations with civic leaders, library trustees and staff.

"Libraries Transforming Communities: Focus on Small and Rural Libraries is an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL)."

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