

Media Release

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Urban Libraries Council Recognizes Durham County Library as a Top Innovator

Durham, NC – The Urban Libraries Council (ULC) announced Durham County Library as one of its 2014 Top Innovators during the Next Libraries Conference held last month in Chicago. A panel of expert judges selected DCL's First Library in Space program from more than 180 applications in the fifth annual ULC Innovations Initiative. ULC representatives will present the award to the library at 7 p.m. on Monday, August 11 at the Board of County Commissioners meeting at 200 E. Main St.

ULC's Innovations Initiative highlights members' programs, services and operating practices that demonstrate their leadership by creating new approaches and practices to ensure the public library is continuously meeting the ever-changing needs of the community. First Library in Space won in the category of Positioning the Library.

First Library in Space took Durham County Library's role as a makerspace and resource for science, technology, engineering, art and math programming to new heights. As part of the 2013 Summer Reading Program, the library launched a capsule into near space using a weather balloon. At about 95,000 feet, the weather balloon expanded to several times its original size, and popped. A parachute brought the capsule safely back to Earth. Cameras and video equipment were placed onboard to capture the entire flight. Teen library patrons helped build the capsule and wrote the original music for the documentary video, which can be viewed online at firstlibraryinspace.org.

"This was truly an opportunity for the library to shine as a place to create using science, technology, engineering, art and math," said Durham County Library Director, Tammy Baggett. "With the expanding role of technology, STEAM literacy has become as necessary for children and teens as traditional literacy. Just as libraries have been a critical partner in fostering generations of readers, we are stepping up to offer STEAM programming through hands-on makerspaces and helping to prepare young people for productive careers."

In announcing the 2014 Top Innovators, ULC President and CEO Susan Benton said these libraries and every library that submitted programs for the Innovations Awards this year demonstrate the amazing work that takes place in libraries every day.

"On behalf of the ULC community throughout North America, I congratulate Durham County Library for being selected as a 2014 Top Innovator. You and your library staff are commended for setting the pace for growth, change and innovation in the field," Benton said. "Each submission highlights exactly how public libraries create value and impact in local communities."

The 2014 Top Innovators, including Honorable Mentions in the 10 categories are:

Category: Leading Learning

Top Innovator: **Grand Rapids Public Library (MI)** *DigiBridge*

Honorable Mention: **Palo Alto City Library (CA)** *makeX: Teen Mobile Makerspace*

Category: Civic and Community Engagement

Top Innovator: **Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library (KS)** *Librarians Facilitate Community Change*

Honorable Mention: **Wichita Public Library (KS)** *Activate Wichita*

Category: Collections

Top Innovator: **Santa Clara County Library District (CA)** *SCCLD – JukePop Launch Self-Publishing*

Honorable Mention: **Pikes Peak Library District (CO)** *Waldo Canyon Fire Digital Collection*

Category: Customer Experience

Top Innovator: **Denver Public Library (CO)** *DPL Connect: A Pedal-Powered Bookmobile*

Honorable Mention: **Edmonton Public Library (AB)** *Great Stuff: EPL Makes It Personal!*

Category: Economic and Workforce Development

Top Innovator: **Memphis Public Library (TN)** *JobLINC: Mobile Bus for Job Seekers and Employers*

Honorable Mention: **King County Library System (WA)** *Building a Workforce that Reflects Our Community*

Category: Health, Wellness, and Public Safety

Top Innovator: **Houston Public Library (TX)** *Healthy L.I.F.E*

Honorable Mention: **Pima County Public Library (AZ)** *Santa Rosa Snacks*

Category: Operations

Top Innovator: **Aurora Public Library (CO)** *Library in a Big Box*

Honorable Mention: **Cuyahoga County Public Library (OH)** *MOVE TEAM!*

Category: Organizational Change and Strategic Management

Top Innovator: **Skokie Public Library (IL)** *Realigning for Greater Access, Learning, and Community*

Honorable Mention: **Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (NC)** *WorkSmart for Process Improvement and Innovation*

Category: Positioning the Library

Top Innovator: **Durham County Library (NC)** *First Library in Space*

Honorable Mention: **Springfield City Library (MA)** *Imagine: A Peace-Full City*

Category: Sustainability

Top Innovator: **Salt Lake County Library Services (UT)** *Sustainability Initiative*

Honorable Mention: **Milwaukee Public Library (WI)** *Better Building Challenge Showcase Facility*

In addition, ULC is honoring two libraries for their leadership in helping their communities respond to crises:

Pioneer Library System (OK) *Virtual Response: May 2013 Oklahoma Tornadoes*

Calgary Public Library (AB) *Come Hell or High Water*

For more information about Durham County Library, visit durhamcountylibrary.org. Read more about the ULC Top Innovators at urbanlibraries.org.

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Durham County Library encourages Discovery, connects the Community and leads in Literacy. As a department of Durham County Government, the library furthers Goal 1 of the county's Strategic Plan by enhancing cultural, educational and creative opportunities. For more information about the library, visit durhamcountylibrary.org.

About the Urban Libraries Council

As a membership organization made up of America's premier public library systems and the organizations that serve them, the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) has spent more than 40 years enriching urban communities by strengthening their public libraries. While ULC members primarily represent urban and suburban libraries, lessons from their work are widely used by all libraries. ULC serves as a forum for thought leaders sharing best and next practices resulting from targeted research, education, and emerging trends. Our programs are recognized for creating new frameworks that invigorate public libraries and their communities.

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