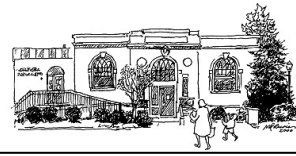


News Release

Karen Kleppe-Lembo
Caldwell Public Library
973-226-2837
librarian@caldwellpl.org.



CALDWELL PUBLIC LIBRARY, ONLY NEW JERSEY LIBRARY AWARDED BIG READ GRANT FROM NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, LEADS FIGHT TO REVERSE DOWNWARD TREND IN READING

Library Launches Extensive Town-Wide Reading Initiative with Edith Wharton's Classic "The Age of Innocence"

Caldwell, N.J.—June 25, 2007—The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) today announced that among 117 national grant recipients, the Caldwell Public Library is the only New Jersey library to receive a 2007 BIG READ grant. The Library will use the \$10,000 matching grant to promote and carry out community-based reading programs between September and December 2007. Additionally, the Library will offer a variety of speakers and programs this fall that will illuminate Edith Wharton's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel. The events, predominantly scheduled during October and November 2007, allow for book groups, students and indeed, all readers, to read the book and benefit from the wide array of related activities, maximizing the entire reading experience.

Launched nationally in 2006, the NEA presents THE BIG READ in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest to encourage literary reading by asking communities to come together to read and discuss a single book. Organizations selected to participate in THE BIG READ receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 to promote and carry out community-based programs.

Modeled on successful "one book, one community" programs, THE BIG READ was created to address the national decline in literary reading as documented in the NEA's 2004 landmark survey *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*. The survey showed that less than half the American adult population reads books as a leisure time activity.

"We are thrilled to be awarded this grant and given the opportunity to participate in the 2007 BIG READ program," said Library Director, Karen Kleppe-Lembo. "We embrace programs that foster a love of reading across all facets of our community, and THE BIG READ enables us to begin reversing the proven decline in literary reading, while targeting a wide spectrum of readers and potential readers in our community, including high school students, college students, book clubs and more."

To encourage community-wide participation in *THE BIG READ*, the Caldwell Public Library has partnered with James Caldwell High School, the Kiwanis Club of Caldwell-West Essex, and the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Caldwell. In addition, Caldwell College, Mount St. Dominic Academy, and a host of community, library, religious, social and other local book groups have joined the effort, all agreeing to read, review and discuss the classic work.

The Library selected The Age of Innocence from a list of twelve literary classics chosen by an esteemed panel of writers, poets, and critics convened by the NEA and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. “We are celebrating our 90th birthday this fall and Edith Wharton’s novel was published just three years after our library was dedicated,” added Kleppe-Lembo. “By reading this literary classic we are not only exposing our community to an ageless work of art, but also educating them about the history of our library and our town.”

THE BIG READ is designed to restore reading to the center of American culture, bringing together partners across the country to encourage reading for pleasure and enlightenment. “By joining the Big Read, these cities and towns are showing how important reading is to the cultural, civic, even economic fabric of its community. They understand the benefit of having people from different generations and walks of life reading and discussing a great book,” said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia. “Yes, this is about reading, but it’s also about getting people to leave their homes and offices, unplug themselves for a few hours, and enjoy the pleasures of literature with their neighbors.”

“We are pleased to announce this second round of Big Read grants. The first-round grantees created innovative and exciting partnership activities that exceeded our expectations,” said IMLS Director Anne-Imelda Radice, Ph.D. “We’re eager to support these additional communities in launching their collaborative efforts. Through the Big Read, IMLS and NEA are assisting people all across the country as they come together in community to rediscover the great American novel.”

The NEA also provides participating communities with a library of free materials, including Reader’s and Teacher’s Guides for each of THE BIG READ novels, an Audio Guide for each novel featuring distinguished actors and writers, an online organizer’s guide for hosting a BIG READ program, BIG READ publicity materials, and a comprehensive program website. The audio guide for The Age of Innocence features screen actor Alfred Molina.

To participate in the Caldwell Public Library’s BIG READ programs or for more information on local activities and events related to THE BIG READ, please contact Karen Kleppe-Lembo at 973-226-2837 or librarian@caldwellpl.org.

For a complete list of communities participating in THE BIG READ, a list of THE BIG READ novels, program application guidelines, or more information on the program, please visit www.neabigread.org.

*The **Caldwell Public Library**, an Andrew Carnegie Library dedicated in 1917, celebrates its 90th birthday in October 2007. Its mission is to provide its diverse community with a wide array of literary, cultural, historical, educational and social resources through personal service and innovative programs utilizing a range of learning technologies in a welcoming environment. www.caldwellpl.org.*

*The **National Endowment for the Arts** is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts—both new and established—bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation’s largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit www.arts.gov.*

*The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit: www.ims.gov.*

***Arts Midwest** connects people throughout the Midwest and the world to meaningful arts opportunities, sharing creativity, knowledge, and understanding across boundaries. Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest’s history spans more than 25 years. For more information, please visit www.artsmidwest.org.*

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