

## **NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK BRINGS HONORS AND CHALLENGES**

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Hyattsville—On April 13, the United States House of Representatives passed a resolution to support the goals and ideals of National Library Week. The resolution outlines the many ways libraries of all kinds serve our country.

The opening text of the resolution states, “Whereas the Nation’s school, academic, public, and special libraries make a difference in the lives of millions of people in the United States, today, more than ever; Whereas librarians are trained professionals, helping people of all ages and backgrounds find and interpret the information they need to live, learn, and work in a challenging economy; Whereas libraries are part of the American Dream, places for opportunity, education, self-help, and lifelong learning.”

Libraries in Prince George’s County have been on the front lines of service during the recession. The System’s libraries have expanded available job resources as more people are turning to libraries for technology access and help in applying for jobs and government assistance online. However, in the past two years funding for the county’s libraries has decreased by \$3.4 million. In addition to a nearly 30 percent cut in book and media spending, the cuts have resulted in forced closings for employee furlough days, reduced hours during the week and elimination of Sunday hours at many branches.

“Library staff members help customers complete online job applications and offer a variety of resources to help customers create resumes and other employment materials. We provide access to job databases and other online resources,” says Prince George’s County Memorial Library System Director Kathleen Teaze. But just when people need their public libraries the most, funding for this valued resource is decreasing, as governments cut library budgets as a way of addressing state and local deficits.

“Public libraries are uniquely positioned to provide a full range of resources American families rely on as they trim expenses and seek employment,” said ALA President Camila Alire. “As the poor economy continues to fuel deep library budget cuts, I’m haunted by the notion that for each hour a library is closed, and for every service lost, thousands will lose the opportunity to better their lives through education.”

Decreased funding has impacted staffing levels at the 18 branches of the Prince George’s County Memorial Library System. The number one challenge affecting libraries’ ability to help job seekers is a lack of professionally-trained staff to effectively help customers with their job-seeking needs.

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