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For Immediate Release

National Library Week Reminds Public of the Valuable Contributions Libraries Make to Their Communities

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh celebrates 114 years of serving the City of Pittsburgh and residents from around the region

(PITTSBURGH, PA – April 15, 2009) For more than fifty years National Library Week (April 12 -18), has been a time to celebrate the contributions that libraries, librarians and library workers make to their communities. During the past few years, libraries throughout the United States have experienced dramatic increases in the use of their services, which in addition to free Internet access, includes resources to assist people in the current economic downturn. At the same time, library systems are under pressure to reduce operating costs as sources of funding diminish. This week, through an annual fund appeal letter, thousands of local residents will be asked to “invest” in Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

With more than 2.6 million visitors last year, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the region’s most visited asset. In 2008, Allegheny County residents borrowed 3.4 million library resources -- the highest circulation in 17 years.

While the national trend for library usage is on the rise, operating funds are declining, causing libraries to tighten daily operating budgets. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh’s 2009 operating budget reflects a 10% reduction. Despite the budget crunch, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh responded to more than 1.3 million questions in 2008 and accommodated more than 175,000 individuals through family-friendly and educational library programs.

“The ways in which families and children use libraries today are ever-changing,” said Dr. Barbara K. Mistick, President and Director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. “Through new resources, such as our redesigned Kids’ Web site, we respond to the needs of the community. Staying current is so vital to the Library’s survival and our ability to engage people in lifetime literacy and learning.”

“We continue to refocus our priorities as we address changing economic conditions and local market trends, added Dr. Mistick. “Our staff is examining how we can serve the public more efficiently and effectively.”

In addition to lending millions of free and interesting books, DVD’s and CDs each year, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh offers downloadable video, eBooks and eAudio; provides streaming music via its Web site, www.carnegielibrary.org, and lends personal MP3 players pre-loaded with audio book recordings.

The Library also provides individuals with information and referral services to aid in job searches, career development, vocational training and higher education. The well-informed library staff assists customers with Internet and database searches that include information for people just starting out in the job market, changing careers, filing for unemployment, going back to school and much more.

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In 1895, philanthropist Andrew Carnegie dedicated the Main library of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and proclaimed it 'free to the people.' While he provided \$1 million in seed money to build the first public library to bear his name in Pittsburgh, he did not endow its on-going costs as he believed the community and local government should take ownership and responsibility for this community asset. For many years, grants from the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania provided operating revenue for Pittsburgh's libraries. In 1994, the Allegheny Regional Asset District was created and became the major source of annual operating funds, thus reducing the role of funding by local government. Currently 70% of the Library's operating funds come from sales tax revenue distributed by the Allegheny Regional Asset District.

In 2004, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh began to actively fundraise to support a capital improvement program to address its aging facilities. By the end of 2008, nearly \$53 million had been raised for the Libraries for Life Capital Campaign. These funds have been allocated to ten projects:

- The renovation or relocation of seven neighborhood libraries, including the opening of CLP – Hill District, the city's first new library since 1980.
- A partial renovation of the first floor of CLP-Main.
- A new library on the North Side to open Summer 2009 and renovation of CLP -East Liberty to begin Summer 2009.

To learn more about Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, please visit www.carnegielibrary.org.

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