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Hartford Public Library Awarded \$40,000 for New Books by Nonprofit First Book

(HARTFORD, CT Dec. 13, 2019) Hartford Public Library has been selected to receive an award of \$40,000 for new children's books that will expand the Library's mission. First Book, the nonprofit social enterprise focused on equal access to quality education for children in need, awarded the funds as part of its OMG Books Awards: Offering More Great Books to Spark Innovation, a program that will give more than \$4.7 million in funding to distribute 1.5 million brand new books and eBooks to children living in low-income communities in 33 U.S. states and territories.

This generous award enables Hartford Public Library, in concert with Hartford Public Schools, to distribute more than 12,000 books to 4,000 Hartford school children. Utilizing the unique collaboration between the two public organizations under their Boundless partnership, a multifaceted approach to mutual goals, free books will be distributed to children at all neighborhood libraries in the city, as well as through school classrooms. At these give-a-way events, children of all ages are given new books to begin or add to their home libraries with the goal of both fostering a life-long love of reading and engaging whole families around literacy.

"Here at Hartford Public Library, we are aware of the phenomenon of book deserts, low income areas where access to books for children is scarce or non-existent. To combat this inequity, First Book, Hartford Public Library and Hartford Public Schools have teamed up to provide the community with the Boundless @ Home Project. Through this generous grant from First Book, every Hartford Public Library neighborhood branch will be having a celebration with raffles, crafts, and snacks, and will be giving away new books for young people of all ages to build home libraries. Brand new, high interest, diverse titles will be available to choose from," said Hartford Public Library President and CEO Bridget Quinn-Carey.

Awardees are using the funding to select books and eBooks from the First Book Marketplace (www.fbmarketplace.com), First Book's award-winning eCommerce platform, that best meet the needs of the children they serve. First Book estimates the total value of the books distributed will be more than \$12 million.

"We know that access to books and eBooks makes a significant difference in a child's future success," said Kyle Zimmer, First Book president, CEO, and cofounder. "Children do not thrive in deeply under-resourced environments and too many of the schools and programs have far too

little. This deprivation has long-term consequences for the children, their families, their communities and our nation. This could not be more urgent. With the OMG Books Awards, First Book and Hartford Public Library are investing not only in the future of the kids we're reaching, but in the overall wellbeing of our nation."

Access to adequate resources is one of the greatest contributors to educational success in the United States.¹ Research indicates that just the presence of books in the home improves educational outcomes, yet low-income communities across the U.S. are plagued by vast book deserts—with one community having only a single book per as many as 830 children.² Additionally, members of the First Book Network, who exclusively serve kids in need, have indicated that without First Book, the children they serve would have access to very few books, if any at all.³ (References below).

Through Hartford's Boundless @ Home Project, approximately 400 teachers will be selecting age appropriate books to give to over 4000 students to take home to continue their home library building. Each student, from a selected 8 of the city's Title I Boundless partner schools, will receive \$10 in books to take home and keep. "Through First Book, this amount goes a long way, and could provide 3 or more books per student. Through this partnership, we look forward to doing our part to eliminate book deserts and help create success through a life-long love of reading," said Denise Martens, Hartford Public Library's System-wide Manager, Youth & Family Services.

Eligible educators, librarians, providers, and others serving children in need can sign up to receive resources from First Book outside of OMG Books Awards at firstbook.org/join. For more information, please visit firstbook.org or follow the latest news on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/firstbook) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/firstbook).

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About Hartford Public Library

Hartford Public Library is redefining the 21st Century urban library experience. With seven locations throughout the city, the Library offers educational, cultural, social and civic experiences for tens of thousands of children, teens and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to engage a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance, technology innovation and youth leadership training. Please visit www.hplct.org.

About First Book

First Book believes education offers children in need the best path out of poverty. Through

¹ Sikora, et al. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.10.003>

² Susan B. Neuman, Naomi Moland. "Book Deserts." Urban Education, 2016. DOI: [10.1177/0042085916654525](https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916654525)

³ First Book Member Survey, 2016

sustainable, market-driven models, First Book breaks down barriers to quality education by making new, high-quality books and educational resources, including sports equipment, winter coats, snacks, and more, affordable to its member network of more than 400,000 registered educators who exclusively serve kids in need. Since 1992, First Book has distributed more learning materials than any other program of its kind: 175 million books and educational resources, worth more than \$1.5 billion, reaching more than 5 million children annually across the U.S. and Canada. First Book also expands the breadth and depth of the education field through a family of social enterprises, including First Book Research & Insights, its proprietary research initiative, and the First Book Accelerator, which brings best-in-class research to the classroom via relevant, usable educator resources.

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