

## **Director's Report September 2007**

### **WLS Annual Meeting**

WLS will be hosting its Annual Meeting on November 13, 2007 at our offices. This year's guest speaker will be Gary Knell who is president and chief executive officer of Sesame Workshop. Mr. Knell leads the non-profit educational organization in its mission to create innovative, engaging content that maximizes the educational power of all media to help children reach their highest potential. He has been instrumental in focusing the organization on Sesame Street's global mission, including groundbreaking co-productions in South Africa, Russia, China and Egypt.

Founded in 1968 as the Children's Television Workshop, its creators shared a common goal: to use television as a tool to help children learn. This group of visionary educators, psychologists, child development experts, artists, writers and musicians pioneered the concept of entertaining, enriching television that could measurably enhance the lives of millions of educationally disadvantaged youngsters. From this collaboration came Sesame Street – now one of the greatest educators of young children in the world.

Mr. Knell formerly served as senior vice president and general counsel at WNET/Channel 13 in New York, was counsel to the U.S. Senate Judiciary and Governmental Affairs Committees, and worked in the California State Legislature and Governor's Office.

He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and serves on the boards of the National Geographic Education Foundation; NetAid, a UN founded organization using technology to fight global poverty; Business for Diplomatic Action, promoting public diplomacy through the private sector; and American Public Television. He is also an advisor to the Annenberg School of Communications, and Common Sense Media. He is a frequent spokesperson in the media and has appeared on CNN, Fox News, NBC's "Today Show," NPR, and CNBC.

### **WLS Bookmobile**

On Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, WLS staff and Chairman Bill Ryan and Vice-Chairman Clinton Young of the County Board of Legislators held a ceremony whereby WLS received a "big check" in the amount of \$85,000 for the purchase of a bookmobile.

Mr. Ryan said that the bookmobile will enable WLS to bring library services to a wide range of community programs and facilities throughout the County that serve diverse constituencies across every age group.

"The WLS came to the County Board with a great vision – a plan to extend the library's reach to every corner of the County," said Ryan. "The bookmobile will supplement the County's already impressive network of libraries and reach people who may not have the mobility or ability to get to a library."

County Legislator Young commented on the bookmobile's value to the Mount Vernon community, "As legislator for the City of Mount Vernon, I'm proud to provide this funding that will go a long way in improving the services and resources for the people of Mount Vernon. This book mobile will open doors for homebound seniors and adults, as well as enhance educational resources and opportunities for our children."

County Legislator Michael Kaplowitz (D-Somers), Chair of the Board's Budget & Appropriations Committee, commented that the County Board's support for the bookmobile is just a continuation of what he considers a very positive and productive partnership between WLS and the County.

Needless to say, we're thrilled.

### **Health Advocacy Centers**

Through a grant provided by the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and services, WLS will be opening two Health Advocacy Centers at the Grinton I. Will Branch of the Yonkers Public Library and the John C. Hart Memorial Library in Shrub Oak. Through Sarah Lawrence College, one of the partners in the program, we have been able to hire one of the Graduate students of their Health Advocacy program to coordinate the program on our behalf. That coordinator's name is Marleise Brosnan. We have also set November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007, at 2:00 p.m. as the program kickoff at the Will library. County Executive Andy Spano and DSPS Commissioner Mae Carpenter have been invited to the event and are expected to speak.

### **WLS Website Redesign.**

Work still continues in the development of the new site. We are tentatively scheduling a soft launch by the end of September so that the staff of the member libraries will have the opportunity to work with the site and comment on what works and does not work.

### **The Big Read**

The Westchester Arts Council has been awarded a NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) grant to participate in "The Big Read" – which is a nationwide effort to try and get reluctant readers to read. The Council selected Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston because of the novel's universal theme of finding one's voice, for its significant contribution to American literary landscape, and its eloquent depiction of the pain and joy of life.

In order to encourage the reluctant reader, WLS and at least 8 of the member libraries will host book discussions for a number of age groups. In addition, WLS will create blogs, pod casts, and wikis to entice and excite the public to read the book and then participate via these new technologies. Since these new technology-based mediums have become such a significant part of everyday life, we have decided to take advantage of them as a way to reach particularly teen-based audiences. In addition, WLS has been approached by WFAS to develop radio programming based on the novel. Lisa Tolliver is a broadcaster on WFAS; she has a weekly talk show on Thursday mornings called *The Lisa Tolliver Show* and is determined to assist us in engaging reluctant readers through her show and the creation of said blogs, wikis and pod casts.

**Trustee Institute (Reminder)**

As a reminder – the third of four Trustee Institutes will take place on Wednesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, at WLS from 6 to 8:30 p.m. The topic up for discussion will be *Planning for a Capital Campaign*. Please encourage your libraries to send interested trustees, Friends group representatives and/or foundation trustees.

**Important Dates to Remember**

October 3, 2007 – Third Trustee Institute – WLS  
October 17-20, 2007 – NYLA Annual Conference – Buffalo, NY  
November 13, 2007 – WLS 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

**Next Board Meeting: October 30, 2007**

Respectfully submitted,



Siobhan A. Reardon  
*Director*