

NEWS RELEASES

Laura Bush presents nation's highest library award to UT Health Science Center for its Rio Grande Valley outreach

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(L-R) Greysi Reyna, outreach librarian for the RAHC Medical Library, and Flor Zuviri, a student at Med High in Mercedes, accept the nation's highest award for libraries and museums from Mrs. Laura Bush.

Mrs. Laura Bush presented the Health Science Center's Regional Academic Health Center Medical Library with the 2004 National Award for Museum and Library Service in a March 14 ceremony in Washington, D.C. The awards are conferred annually by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to institutions that have demonstrated a perpetual, long-term commitment to public service through innovative programs and community partnerships.

"As a former schoolteacher and librarian, I know that museums and libraries are true treasures for discovery and learning, and I'm delighted to recognize this wonderful institution," Mrs. Bush said.

The Regional Academic Health Center (RAHC) Medical Library is located in the UT Health Science Center's RAHC Medical Education Division building in Harlingen in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. The RAHC Medical Library, an outreach of the parent Dolph Briscoe Jr. Library at the Health Science Center campus 300 miles away, attends to the academic needs of faculty, staff, residents and students from the Health Science Center's School of Medicine who are teaching, seeing patients,

completing medical rotations and conducting research in the Valley.

The RAHC Medical Library also meets the general health information needs of local residents. This is especially important to this low-income community, where many residents lack transportation to medical facilities and face language and cultural barriers. In partnership with community-based organizations, lay women outreach workers known as promotoras are trained by librarians to use laptop computers with wireless Internet access to share important health information with residents of the community's substandard housing developments.

The RAHC Medical Library also is using a "train the trainer" approach in its partnership with the South Texas High School for the Health Professions – also known as "Med High" – where students who have been trained to use a variety of Web-based health information sources have gone on to teach other students, their families and people attending shopping mall health fairs. Last year, this project trained more than 2,000 people how to access high-quality Internet-based resources to learn how they can take positive steps to improve their health.

Flor Zuviri, a 16-year-old who has been active in the MedlinePlus program and who will soon attend college to prepare for a career as a pediatrician, accepted the award alongside the Health Science Center's Greysi Reyna, librarian at the RAHC Medical Library; Mary J. Moore, Ph.D.; director of libraries; and Debi Warner, director of community outreach with the Center for South Texas Programs.

Other museums and libraries that received the award include the Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago, Ill.; Flint Public Library, Flint, Mich.; Mayaguez Children's Library Inc., Mayaguez, Puerto Rico; Western Folklife Center Inc., Elko, Nev.; and the Zoological Society of San Diego, San Diego, Calif.

Dr. Moore noted that the establishment of the RAHC Medical Library fulfilled the vision and hard work of the Briscoe Library's two previous directors, Drs. David Kronick and Virginia Bowden. Dozens of talented library staff assisted in its development. "Without the Health Science Center and the Briscoe Library, there would be no RAHC Medical Library, and without the vision for outreach services dating back four decades to Drs. Kronick and Bowden, this award would never have been possible," Dr. Moore said.

The National Award for Museum Service was established in 1994, and the National Award for Library Service was established in 2000. Recipients of the awards are chosen for their innovative approaches to public service, and for their success in improving communities and making a difference in peoples' lives. All types of museums, from anthropological to zoological, fine art to folk art, urban, suburban, rural, large and small are eligible for the award. Public and private nonprofit libraries are eligible to receive this award, and nominations of libraries of all sizes are encouraged.

"Museums and libraries play a powerful role in building and sustaining the communities that are the foundation of American democracy today," said Institute of Museum and Library Services Director Robert S. Martin, Ph.D. "That means being much more than a place to view artwork or a building that houses volumes of books. It means becoming a place that understands its unique ability and duty to respond to the needs of those in the immediate community, and in many cases far beyond."

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is an independent federal grant-making agency dedicated to creating and sustaining a nation of learners by helping libraries and museums serve their communities. The Institute fosters leadership, innovation, and a lifetime of learning by supporting the nation's 15,000 museums and 122,000 libraries. The Institute also encourages partnerships to expand the educational benefit of libraries and museums. To learn more about the Institute, please log on to www.ims.gov.

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