



NCLIS

U.S. National Commission on
Libraries and Information Science

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News Release

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For Immediate Release

NCLIS Award for Model Library Health Information Programs Launched

Washington, DC, November 1, 2005—Beginning today the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is launching a nationwide award for libraries with exemplary consumer health information programs. For the next three months, until January 31, 2006, the competition will be open to any type of library that provides health information or promotes healthy lifestyles. Libraries wishing to submit an application may complete the form on the NCLIS Web site: <http://awards.nclis.gov>.

The first round of judging will be conducted at the state level. Each state has a panel of judges who will select a state winner. A task force of Commissioners will review the state winners and select ten finalists who will each receive a \$1000 prize. The finalists will be invited to Washington DC to receive their awards and participate in a forum at the National Library of Medicine on May 3, 2006.

Also on May 3, the grand prize winner will be announced and awarded \$20,000. A panel of three distinguished judges, each of whom has helped set national policy in the healthcare or library arenas, will select the top winning program from among the ten finalists. The three judges are:

- **Dr. J. Edward Hill**, President of the American Medical Association
- **Joseph Califano, Jr.**, President and Chairman of the National Center on Substance Abuse at Columbia University and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare
- **Dr. Louis W. Sullivan**, Chairman of the National Health Museum and former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services

In announcing the awards, NCLIS Chairman Dr. Beth Fitzsimmons points out that since strengthening the relevance of libraries is one of the Commission's goals, "I can't think of a better way to do that than to encourage libraries to take the lead in providing consumer health information."

NCLIS Executive Director Dr. Trudi Bellardo Hahn says that libraries are a natural resource for health information. “The Commission established this award to encourage all libraries to build on what they already do well. The Nation’s libraries already provide easily accessed, authoritative, and trusted consumer information of all kinds to their users. Identifying exemplary health information projects through this prize will provide direction and insight for library managers across the country. NCLIS is delighted to support a program of such vital importance.”

In 2004 the Commission sponsored the NCLIS Blue Ribbon Consumer Health Information Recognition Award for Libraries, to identify best practices among libraries (see the report at: www.nclis.gov). Members of the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) assisted with the awards that were presented to 37 libraries across the country. The new NCLIS Health Award for Libraries program grew out of the Blue Ribbon Awards pilot program and will focus a national spotlight on best library health information practices.

NCLIS Commissioner Mary (Mitzi) H. Perdue leads the NCLIS Libraries and Health Communication Task Force. As a former national syndicated columnist, she recognizes the importance of healthcare in the lives of Americans everywhere. She says, “In the United States, one dollar in seven is spent on healthcare. That amounts to \$1.7 trillion dollars annually. Health scientists know that up to 70 percent of what we spend would not be needed if we practiced healthy lifestyles. Healthy lifestyles can not only save us untold personal misery, they could also save the country a trillion dollars, if we all did the following: ate better, exercised more, had our preventive check-ups, and avoided risky behavior like smoking and drugs.”

“There is a huge need in this country for changes in lifestyle,” says Perdue, “and there is a structure that can help meet this need: the library. There are 120,000 libraries, including roughly 16,000 public libraries, across the Nation. There are 1.2 billion visits to libraries each year, so libraries are a perfect place for disseminating healthy lifestyle information. This award program presents the ultimate ‘win, win, win.’ The libraries win. The consumer wins. The country wins.”

Dr. Fitzsimmons notes that the award should prompt more people to turn to their libraries for health information. “Citizens need to know that authoritative and accessible consumer health information is available at their local libraries. The accurate and free information libraries provide is an excellent use of our tax dollars.”

About NCLIS

The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) is a permanent, independent agency of the Federal government charged by Public Law 91-345 to advise the President and Congress on national and international library and information policies, to appraise and assess the adequacies and deficiencies of library and information resources and services, and to develop overall plans for meeting national library and information needs.

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