

News Release

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CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY WINS 2020 INNOVATION AWARD FROM URBAN LIBRARIES COUNCIL FOR MECKTECH PROGRAM

Award demonstrates transformative approach to revolutionizing public libraries

Charlotte, NC – December 14, 2020 – Charlotte Mecklenburg Library’s MeckTech program was announced as one of the 10 Top Innovators awards during the Urban Libraries Council 2020 Innovations Celebration held virtually on December 11, winning in the Digital Citizenship category. The Library’s MeckTech program was among award winners recognized for their level of ingenuity, the outcomes achieved and the ability for other libraries to adapt and implement their work. The annual Innovations award program raises the visibility of cutting-edge programs, strategies, tools, techniques and ideas from ULC’s member library systems across the U.S. and Canada.

The Library was selected by a panel of expert judges from 260 submissions in 10 categories that showcase creative thinking and imaginative applications of library resources. The MeckTech program was funded by Mecklenburg County as a grantee of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and made available 1,400 free computer devices to eligible households in Mecklenburg County adversely affected by COVID-19. While many organizations and institutions rapidly transitioned to digital and online platforms to help serve their customers during the pandemic closures, this quick pivoting in services unfortunately left a whole segment of the population behind. It is estimated that in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, nearly 20% of all households—or 80,000 households—lack a computer in the home.

“Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is honored to receive this award for serving our community through the important work of reducing the digital divide, especially during this difficult time of COVID-19. With the support of the CARES Act from Mecklenburg County, we placed 1,400 free computers into the hands of residents in search of work, of students and parents struggling with virtual learning, of people with physical challenges, and of the elderly navigating the healthcare system,” said Seth Ervin, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Chief Innovation Officer. “Our Library works to improve lives and build a stronger community, and the inspiring responses of recipients affirm the vital leadership role we serve in connecting our neighbors to the digital ecosystem.”

“This year’s winners have quickly taken bold moves to ensure that the library continues to serve the needs of the people in their community – especially those most vulnerable including children, stressed families, isolated seniors and struggling small businesses,” said Urban Libraries Council President and CEO Susan Benton. “In the 10th year of our Innovations Initiative, we received the most dynamic and cutting-edge submissions to date. We celebrate Charlotte Mecklenburg Library for creating an initiative that will positively impact their community and serve as a model to public libraries throughout North America.”

There is a critical need in the community to bridge and erase the digital divide in Mecklenburg County and the Library continues to serve as a leader in the digital inclusion space, committed to making this effort a success. The Library is currently in the second phase of its re-opening plan, which allows for customer browsing inside branch locations, holds pickup and self-checkout, limited express computer use and a continued focus on following safety procedures and protocols. More information on the re-opening and services available can be found at cmlibrary.org.

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About Charlotte Mecklenburg Library:

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is one of America’s leading urban public libraries, serving a community of more than one million citizens in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. Through 20 locations, targeted outreach and online resources, the Library delivers exceptional services and programs, with a mission to improve lives and build a stronger community. For more, visit cmlibrary.org.

About Urban Libraries Council

The Urban Libraries Council is an innovation and impact tank of North America’s leading public library systems. ULC drives cutting-edge research and strategic partnerships to elevate the power of libraries as essential, transformative institutions for the 21st-century. More than 150 urban member libraries in the U.S. and Canada rely on ULC to identify significant challenges facing today’s communities and provide new tools and techniques to help libraries achieve stronger outcomes in education, digital equity, workforce and economic development, and race and social equity.

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