2006 Health Award for Libraries

by Marc Galbraith, Deputy State Librarian

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) encourages the nation's libraries to align their resources to address the health needs of the country. Quality health information is a pressing need for every American, and libraries in every community are working hard to provide citizens with consumer-focused health information.

The goal of the NCLIS Health Awards program is to help solve a critical national problem by tapping into the creativity of the nation's 120,000 libraries. The U.S currently spends one dollar in seven on health care or more than \$1.7 trillion a year, and these already-high health care costs are rising at an unsustainable pace. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control, 75% of the nation's medical care costs come from a small number of chronic disorders, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Although chronic diseases are among the most common and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable. Some experts estimate that 70% of our health care expenditures would not be needed if we would: eat a healthy diet, exercise enough, avoid such risky behaviors as smoking, abusing alcohol, or using drugs, and have regular check-ups with a primary care physician or other health care provider.

Because of their broad reach, libraries are uniquely equipped to disseminate information about health promotion and to encourage healthy lifestyles. All ages, races, and economic levels use libraries. Nationwide, library visits in public libraries totaled 1.2 billion a year or 4.3 library visits per capita. The 2006 NCLIS Health Awards for Libraries celebrates the role of libraries in community-based health promotion and recognizes the unique contributions libraries can make because of their large information resources and their diverse customer base.

The 2006 NCLIS Health Award for Libraries has been established specifically to recognize libraries that excel in helping citizens find the consumer health information they need and in helping users learn how to live healthy lifestyles.

All libraries in the United States, big and small, public, school, academic and special are eligible for the award. If your library is working to encourage healthy lifestyles, share what you do. Apply for the 2006 NCLIS Health Award for Libraries. In each state, a top candidate will be selected by a panel of distinguished judges, chosen by State Librarian Christie Brandau. From these 52 candidates, ten winners will be chosen, with one \$20,000 prize winner and nine \$1,000 finalists.

Apply by end of day January 31, 2006.

To learn more, go to www.nclis.gov and click on 2006 Health Awards.