



August 29, 2019

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**Library of Congress Announces Winners of 2019 Literacy Awards**  
*Top Honors Awarded to ProLiteracy Worldwide, American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults and ConTextos*

Three organizations working to expand literacy and promote reading in the United States and worldwide will be awarded the 2019 Library of Congress Literacy Awards at the National Book Festival gala, Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden announced today.

Hayden and philanthropist David M. Rubenstein will award the top prizes to: ProLiteracy Worldwide of Syracuse, New York; American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults of Baltimore; and ConTextos of Chicago.

The Literacy Awards, originated by Rubenstein in 2013, honor organizations doing exemplary, innovative and replicable work. They spotlight the need for communities worldwide to unite in working for universal literacy.

“Literacy is the ticket to learning, opportunity and empowerment on a global scale,” said Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden. “Through the generosity of David M. Rubenstein, the Library of Congress is proud to honor and celebrate the achievements of these extraordinary organizations in their efforts to advance reading levels and give people the foundation for a better life.”

**Prizes and Recipients**

**David M. Rubenstein Prize (\$150,000): ProLiteracy Worldwide, Syracuse, New York**

ProLiteracy Worldwide advances and supports programs to help adults acquire literacy skills needed to function more effectively in their daily lives. It has 1,000 member programs across 50 states and works with 30 partners in 25 countries to provide a wide range of adult literacy and basic education services to vulnerable populations. ProLiteracy builds capacity among frontline literacy providers by modeling proven instructional approaches, developing affordable, evidence-based learning resources, and providing professional development and technical assistance. ProLiteracy was formed by the 2002 merger of Laubach Literacy International (founded in 1955) and Literacy Volunteers of America (founded in 1962). For more than 60 years, ProLiteracy has scaled successful practices and driven advocacy efforts by activating its grassroots network, resulting in a broad and sustained effort to improve and advance adult literacy at the community level.

**American Prize (\$50,000): American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults, Baltimore**

Established in 1919, the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults is a service agency that assists blind and deaf-blind persons in securing reading matter, educates the public about blindness, provides specialized aids and appliances to the blind, gives consultation to governmental and private agencies serving the blind, offers assistance to those losing vision in their later years, offers services to blind children and their parents, and works toward improving the quality of life for the blind and deaf-blind. This includes services such as free braille books, free braille calendars and free white canes. Central to the organization's work has been a commitment to braille literacy and the knowledge that braille is the only true means for literacy for the blind.

**International Prize (\$50,000): ConTextos, Chicago**

ConTextos brings literacy to schools, prisons and communities in El Salvador via two programs: Soy Lector (I'm a Reader) and Soy Autor (I'm an author). The Soy Lector Program trains local community members and teachers to develop libraries to encourage reading and the discussion of ideas in the community and schools. The Soy Autor Program encourages youth affected by violence to write their memoirs. Through this writing exercise, they work through the effect that violence has had on their life, either as a victim or perpetrator. In the process, participants develop critical literacy skills. The program has been replicated in Guatemala and Honduras and continues to grow. To date, ConTextos has created 84 libraries across El Salvador; 11,092 students have access to high-quality books; and 853 young authors have published their memoirs.

The Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program is also honoring 15 organizations for their implementation of best practices in literacy promotion.

These best practice honorees are:

- Bring Me a Book, Redwood City, California
- The Conscious Connect, Springfield, Ohio
- Friends of Matènwa, Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Hartford Public Library, Hartford, Connecticut
- The Jane Stern Dorado Community Library, Dorado, Puerto Rico
- Literacy for Incarcerated Teens, New York City
- LitWorld International Inc., New York City
- Meridian Library District, Meridian, Idaho
- Nal'ibali Trust, Cape Town, South Africa
- One World Education, Washington, D.C.
- The PEN/Faulkner Foundation, Washington, D.C.
- Razia's Ray of Hope, Wellesley, Massachusetts
- Ready for Reading, Dorset, Vermont
- Riecken Community Libraries, Washington, D.C.
- Western Massachusetts Writing Project, Amherst, Massachusetts

David M. Rubenstein is the co-founder and co-executive chairman of The Carlyle Group. He is a major benefactor of the Library of Congress and the chairman of the Library's lead donor group, the James Madison Council. More information on the awards is available at [read.gov/literacyawards](https://read.gov/literacyawards).

The Library of Congress is the world's largest library, offering access to the creative record of the United States — and extensive materials from around the world — both on-site and online. It is the main research arm of the U.S. Congress and the home of the U.S. Copyright Office. Explore collections, reference services and other programs and plan a visit at [loc.gov](https://loc.gov); access the official site for U.S. federal legislative information at [congress.gov](https://congress.gov); and register creative works of authorship at [copyright.gov](https://copyright.gov).

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PR 19-081  
08/29/19  
ISSN 0731-3527