



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2017.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Complete Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____



Program: Dialog, Engagement & Service: Innovative Loudoun Book Clubs

Loudoun County, Virginia

Loudoun County Public Library

General Overview

The mission of Loudoun County Public Library includes fostering the love and joy of reading.

Complementing this mission are more than a dozen regular book clubs held at Loudoun library branches, and the dedicated patrons who love them. These programs have been a central part of the Library's core programming efforts for decades.

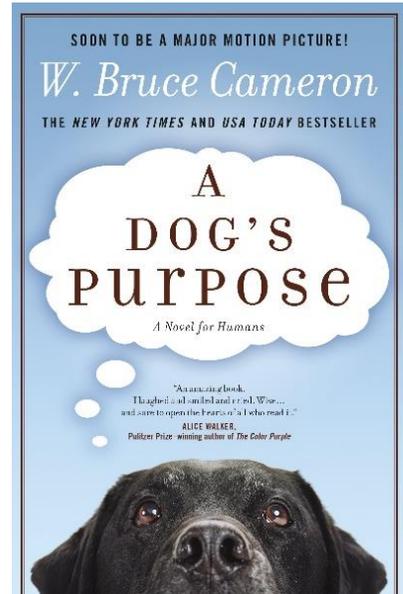
In recent years, Loudoun County Public Library has worked to foster a culture of staff empowerment, giving employees the freedom to pursue new ideas and address community needs and concerns through innovative programs. In some cases, programs have been created through the use of staff task forces, with employees from all ranks for the organization volunteering to generate ideas, conduct research and propose recommendations around a central idea or goal. In others, staff members work in small teams at the branch level to create models for inventive and pioneering programs based on the specific interests of their patrons.

This approach has worked very well in the Loudoun book club community, where active, highly educated and engaged adults look to the library not only as a source of information, but as a valued gathering place where they can participate in discussions about the political and social needs of their local, regional and national communities.

Beginning in 2016, new book club programs either being offered or in development by staff included:

- **Book to Action:** Read a book and make a difference in your community. Book to Action is a book club developed around a service project, and features patrons reading a specified book, participating in a book discussion and then participating in one or more service projects to address a related community need.

In one example from our Gum Spring Library, one month was dedicated to *A Dog's Purpose*. The program was planned in partnership with the Loudoun County Animal Shelter and the Dulles South Rotary. Library staff led a book discussion on



March 30 for the public, with members of the Rotary and Animal Shelter staff discussing the importance of volunteerism and responsible pet ownership. The Animal Adoption Bus was then scheduled to visit the library on April 2 for a pet adoption day, while 36 participants also made and donated pet beds and toys. In addition, the Rotary held a pet food supply drive for donation to the Loudoun Pet Pantry which was in need of supplies. Some families in our community often need small supplies of pet food to hold them over, and this book club successfully provided this essential requirement. In another Book to Action, a project was designed around the book *Challenger Deep* by Neal Shusterman, a book detailing a teenager's descent into mental illness. Library staff partnered with our Loudoun Mental Health Department on this important topic, discussing the book and providing mental health information to the community. Future Book to Action sessions will include blood drives and school supply drives.

- **Great Decisions:** a foreign policy discussion group planned by staff in the southern portion of our county, and two community volunteers with extensive backgrounds as Foreign Service Officers. The Loudoun County Public Library program is a series of discussions from the Foreign

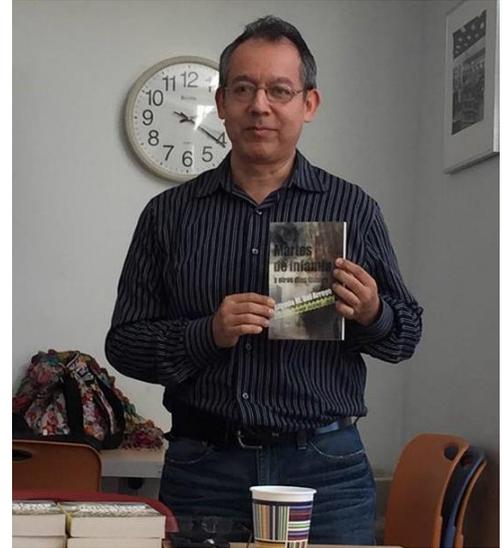
Policy Association's Great Decisions program on world affairs. The program model involves reading the Great Decisions Briefing Book, watching the DVD and meeting in a group to discuss the most critical geo-political issues facing America today. In our well-educated community, many have government backgrounds and have responded enthusiastically to this program, with an audience of predominantly men between the ages of 40-70 years old. ***This is a difficult demographic for the library to reach.***



- **George C. Marshall House Foreign Policy Book Club:** this specialized book club grew from a simple brown-bag lunch group that met to discuss foreign affairs. With the support from the Library system's director, this group has now grown into a regular book club, dedicated to the serious analysis of past and present international relations. The library works with staff from the George C. Marshall Center, promoting and attending the program, and providing the books.

Utilizing local subject matter experts on world affairs succeeded in bringing a new demographic to the library.

- **Spanish Language Book Club:** this club resulted from the initiative of a librarian who wanted to better engage with the Spanish speaking community. Recognizing the need for a higher quality selection of books written in Spanish (as opposed to *translated from English into Spanish*), she worked with LCPL administrative staff to source these books and then host these popular programs. In some instances, she succeeded in bringing the author to meet with participants (*seen at right*).



Eligibility Summary

This application complies with the following standards:

1. All programs in this application were either developed & scheduled, or already taking place, by January 1, 2017. All are currently operational.
2. Library staff played a significant role in their development and implementation.
3. None of these programs have received a previous VACo Achievement Award.

Challenges/Needs for the Program

Loudoun County and Loudoun County Public Library had several challenges which were addressed through the creation of these programs:

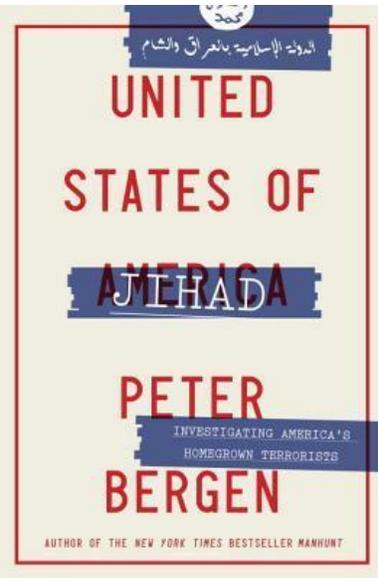
- **Book to Action** has provided a unique way to transform traditional book clubs into action groups, mobilizing enthusiastic volunteers around a central service project that can address the unmet needs of our local nonprofits and residents in our community. It promotes community

engagement beyond our library walls, and focuses on books that not only address an important issue, but also provides readers and organizations an opportunity to make a difference.



- **Great Decisions** has not only effectively addressed the challenge of bringing an under-represented demographic into the library (older men), but it has provided a platform where sensitive current political issues are discussed *respectfully*, with facilitation *by subject matter experts* who effectively steer the conversation and address points of contention. Topics have included the future of Europe, trade and politics, Saudi Arabia in Transition, and Conflict in the South China Sea. This group has had an average of twenty participants a month with attendees coming from all over Loudoun County. A second group is being planned at another branch in 2018.
- **Marshall House Foreign Policy Book Club** provides an environment for our region's significant population of current and former diplomats and high-level government employees. This monthly program is held at the George C. Marshall Center, the retirement home of George

Catlett Marshall, Jr., an American military leader, Chief of Staff of the Army, Secretary of State, and the third Secretary of Defense. Once noted as the "organizer of victory" by Winston Churchill for his leadership of the Allied victory in World War II, Marshall served as the United States Army Chief of Staff during the war and as the chief military adviser to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Building upon the legacy left behind by Marshall, and sitting in his former home, these policy-loving residents are able to take advantage of this unique opportunity for serious discussion about past and current international issues.



The Marshall House Foreign Policy Book Club provides a unique opportunity in Loudoun for serious discussion of critical international issues. Above, a recent club selection.

- **The Spanish Language Book Club** improves service to our county's significant (approximately 35% of our community) Spanish-speaking population, providing these residents with books originally *composed in Spanish*, and giving them a rare opportunity to gather, bond over books and discuss these works with a trained bilingual facilitator.



Three Criteria for Award Selection, Met in the Following Ways:

- 1. Promotes intergovernmental cooperation and/or cooperation with local, state and federal entities and/or a private enterprise in addressing a problem or situation.** These innovative programs involve both local government and private enterprise partnerships in program hosting and session content. This includes organizations such as the George C. Marshall International Center, in Leesburg, Virginia; the Foreign Policy Institute in New York; and local groups including the Dulles South Rotarians and the Loudoun County Animal Shelter.
- 2. Provides a model that other local governments may learn from or implement in their own localities.** These programs have been created at specific branches within the Loudoun County Public Library system. Within less than a year, both Book to Action and the Great Decisions programs have already expanded to other locations within the Loudoun County Public Library system. These programs will also be shared by staff in 2017 upon their travels to state and national library events, such as the annual Virginia Library Association and American Library Association conferences. In this way, these programs can be spread to other library systems throughout the state and country.
- 3. Provides a level of customization by Loudoun County Public Library.** The Spanish Language Book Club and Marshall House Book Club reflect local program creation and partnerships. While Great Decisions is America's largest discussion program on world affairs and involves reading the standardized reading materials and topics, each session's conversations are highly customized through the expertise and unique perspectives of the two local program hosts.

The Book to Action format was based on a model in Mutnomah County, California Library in 2008, which has since grown and been adopted in other locations. However, Loudoun library staff plan each Book to Action event, from selecting each



book read, to choosing each group of volunteers, developing each service project, and coordinating with all partnering organizations.

Financing, Staffing, Results

1. All financing and staffing for all programs is provided by Loudoun County Public Library, including book purchases. All of the programs utilize library staff, with costs focused on reading materials. LCPL staff are joined by facilitators in hosting Great Decisions and the Marshall House Foreign Policy Book Club.



2. Successful results for these programs include:

- Consistent, loyal and increased participation at programs.
- Significant increases over and above typical participation by both men and Spanish-speaking adults in LCPL book clubs. Whereas many traditional book clubs might not have

any men or Spanish-speaking residents, both of these demographics now actively participate at these library programs.

- c. Hundreds of dollars in contributions made to community organizations resulting from service projects.
- d. Increased community engagement with residents based on community service projects from Book to Action.

One patron publicly stated regarding Book to Action: “Thank you for this event! Our family is enjoying "A Dog's Purpose" as a read aloud every chance we get to read together. It is such a compelling read and very difficult to stop at the end of a chapter! I think our family will be adding more books by W. Bruce Cameron to our list of books to read in the future. I am excited to see the generous pet food donations piling up in the collection bins at Giant and Mug 'n Muffin. Way to go neighbors!”

- e. Involving community members in library programming definitely contributes to its success and further strengthens relationships with the local community. Both Book to Action and Great Decisions have re-engaged and brought community members **back to the library** that were connected with through LCPL’s 2015 Human Library program, one of the first of its kind in Virginia. This was a program where subject experts in the community became “books” for a day and the public could meet and engage in conversations with them. One of the Great Decisions facilitators was our “diplomat” from this 2015 program, and a member of the Rotary in Book to Action was also our Cybersecurity expert during the Human Library.

Brief Program Summary

A chief mission of Loudoun County Public Library is to engage with residents and foster the love of reading. For decades, it has done so very successfully through multiple story times, author programs, and book clubs.

Thanks to the initiative of empowered staff to create new programs, Loudoun County Public Library is leading the next generation of community engagement through innovative book clubs. The programs are reaching out and attracting new library users, covering contemporary topics, encouraging educated and respectful dialogs on complex issues, and addressing specific community needs.

Innovative new book clubs through Loudoun County Public Library include Book to Action, a book club partnering with community organizations on service projects related to the book; Great Decisions, a popular policy-focused group bringing a new demographic to the library; Spanish Book Club, providing a unique opportunity for our Spanish-speaking residents to bond over books and conversation; and the Marshall House Foreign Affairs Book Club, a group providing former diplomats and senior-level government employees opportunity for serious examinations of foreign affairs, hosted in the home of former Secretary of State and World War II leader George C. Marshall.



George C. Marshall statue at the Marshall Center, book in hand