



News Release

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CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG LIBRARY NAMED FIRST LIBRARY HOST NEWSROOM BY REPORT FOR AMERICA

Unique partnership features WFAE and Digital Public Library of America

Charlotte, NC – December 4, 2019 – Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is proud to announce it has been named the first Library as a Host Newsroom by Report for America (RFA) as part of a unique partnership with WFAE and Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). The RFA program will field 250 emerging journalists in 164 host news organizations to serve local communities across 46 states in the coming year. The partnership between the Library, WFAE and DPLA will increase reporting, expand local Wikipedia entries, create a series of community forums, offer talk-back opportunities, and produce programs and exhibits that all serve as the foundation for a future Community Media Lab that collects the voices, perspectives, stories, and investigative reports reflecting the diversity of the Mecklenburg community.

In the RFA program, two talented, emerging journalists will be embedded in the Charlotte community for one to two years using both radio and Wikipedia to fill news deserts and cover the local government beat on under-covered issues and communities. The Library will host the content.

“Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is excited to be the first public library involved in the Report for America initiative. This project will strengthen our relationship with WFAE and DPLA, as well as leverage the strength of Wikipedia to make an impact on the availability of information about local issues, politics, and the people in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community,” says Martha Yesowitch, community partnership leader at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library.

“Libraries, like newsrooms, seek to inform, engage and empower people to make their lives and their communities better,” says Ju-Don Marshall, chief content officer of WFAE. “With those mutual goals in mind, we will use this unique partnership to experiment with different ways of engaging residents around news and information to better meet their needs.”

“In a country founded on the freedom of the press, there shouldn’t be news deserts, but there are -- places where people don’t have access to the latest information about their community,” says John Bracken, executive director of DPLA. “Through this first-ever, forward-thinking collaboration with Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and WFAE, DPLA will help fill this gap for communities in Mecklenburg County by doing something that others have only talked about - combining the strengths of Wikipedia with the strengths of a newsroom. Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is one of the best libraries in the country and we’re excited to partner with them and WFAE to do what libraries do best -- ensure that information is free and accessible to all.”

In the RFA program for this location, both journalists will work to reduce barriers to political engagement while reversing systemic disconnection via free and readily accessible information. One writer will be housed at Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and act as a Community Wikipedia editor to increase social capital by building community networks while setting a tone for neighborhood empowerment through conversation and evergreen stories to be posted to Wikipedia. This position will be mentored by a Wikipedia expert who will work virtually with WFAE, the Library, and DPLA to collaborate, provide technical guidance, and conduct outreach and coordination with the larger Wikimedia community.

A traditional reporter will be housed at WFAE under the mentorship of experienced journalists to cover the local civics beat, from Census outcomes to the democratic process within the historical context of

voting law, districting, and civil rights. The reporter will engage with citizens around participation in civic and political opportunities, and work with partners to leverage community forums, discussion, and more leading up to the Republican National Convention to be held in Charlotte in August 2020.

Report for America announced the winning newsrooms December 2, 2019—[full list here](#)—and will select the corps members in a separate application process for journalists that also kicks off. This news marks the single biggest hiring announcement of journalists in recent memory—and comes as a direct response to the worsening crisis in local news across the country.

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About WFAE

WFAE 90.7 FM is a nonprofit public radio station, licensed to the University Radio Foundation Inc. With 90.3 in Hickory, 106.1 in Laurinburg and 93.7 in Southern Pines, WFAE serves more than 320,000 monthly listeners and 200,000 monthly readers in the greater Charlotte region with an award-winning mix of local, national and international news, and entertainment programs from NPR® and other content partners. Listen online at WFAE.org.

About DPLA

The Digital Public Library of America amplifies the value of libraries and cultural organizations as Americans' most trusted sources of shared knowledge. We do this by collaborating with partners to accelerate innovative tools and ideas that empower and equip libraries to make information more accessible. Visit <https://dp.la>.

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.

Media Contact:

Ann Stawski
Marketing & Communications Leader
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
704-416-0702
astawski@cmlibrary.org

Media resources:

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library newsroom: cmlibrary.org/library-news

Social sharing:

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