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INSPIRE WITH TRANSFORMATIONAL STORIES

The individual stories that demonstrate how your library directly impacts people's lives are powerful tools in helping your community understand the value of the library.

You and your team inspire, empower, and transform lives every day — from the person who gets back to work using the library's job resources to the young entrepreneur who is able to access the necessary tools to start a small business. These inspirational anecdotes can help you effectively communicate your library's vital role in the community. Are you talking about it? Have you trained your team to recognize and document [positive stories](#) about your patrons and how they use the library? Are you communicating these stories internally? Are you sharing these stories with the community?

These small events that may sometimes seem trivial at the time are tremendously meaningful in providing a picture of how your library makes an impact locally. These real-life examples—some with incredibly significant personal outcomes—tell a powerful story of how your library brings value to individuals and to the community. It's often difficult to put into words the breadth of what public libraries do and these personal anecdotes literally put a face on the true impact—which encourages community members to think differently about the library and helps them make connections back to their role in support.

Use your local awareness campaign as an opportunity to find and communicate these stories and to develop creative ways to put them out in the public eye.

Talk to your staff, your volunteers, your board and other internal stakeholders, and your patrons. (You could send out a call for stories via your newsletter or social media, or even ask your local newspaper to help.) Once you identify your stories, be sure to document them appropriately by interviewing the patron and gaining permission to use their story for promotional purposes.

Take time to think about how to talk about each story individually and as a combined message. Integrate this message into campaign promotional plans—and include the person behind the story when possible (e.g., feature on posters, invite to events or ask them to write an editorial). These stories of impact will help change the conversation about your library from services and information to a discussion about transformational opportunities—a key factor in changing community perceptions about your library.

What you can do:

- Create displays that include custom posters and quotes.
- Conduct interviews with each person and feature the interviews on your Web site—and promote using social media.
- Make simple videos you can use online and for advertising (e.g., movie theater advertising).
- Invite the featured community members to tell their story at a library event, or as part of a library presentation at a community organization or during a community event.
- Pitch your local media using excerpts from your interviews.
- Partner with a community organization to sponsor a speaker series featuring people who used the library to better their lives and give back to the community.
- Create custom ads, and work with the media outlet to develop a feature that includes more information about each person's story as part of your advertising package.