



Massachusetts
Libraries

SAWYER FREE LIBRARY AWARDED MBLC GRANT TO LAUNCH "THE CIVIC HUB"

New initiative to promote civil engagement and discussions within the community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Gloucester, MA (September 12, 2019) - - **The Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library** (SFL) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a federal Library Service and Technology Act (LSTA) grant for \$7,500 from the **Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioner** (MBLC) to launch its new initiative "**The Civic Hub.**" The grant will directly support the program's aim to create opportunities that foster civic engagement and discussion on issues facing the Gloucester community locally and beyond.

The Sawyer Free Library, as it has for over 175 years, aspires each day to serve the information and cultural needs of Gloucester residents of all ages. Its guiding mission is to be a place of learning, innovation, and creativity to strengthen the community as well as providing structure for inclusive, respectful conversations that matter. It is the goal of "The Civic Hub" to create a sense of space and community within the Library for civic reflection, dialogue, and engagement by offering informed issue-oriented public programs and opportunities for discussion on topics that are meaningful to the community.

"We are proud to deliver grant funding to libraries for projects that fill unique needs of libraries across Massachusetts," said Rob Favini, Head of Library Advisory and Development at the MBLC. "Libraries continue to be a vital resource to the communities they serve. Programs funded through LSTA grants illustrate the diverse range of topics and audiences served by Massachusetts libraries."

"We are so grateful to the MBLC for supporting our vision of The Civic Hub," said, **Beth Pocock**, SFL's Assistant Director. "Gloucester has always taken pride in being a place where residents enjoy a culture of robust community involvement. However, every community, especially in a city that is continually changing demographically, economically and physically, can benefit from increased and meaningful civic engagement around complex and sometimes difficult topics."

"The Civic Hub" will address three specific issues that are important Gloucester and its future: **Immigration, Journalism and the Public Trust** and **The Rising Ocean**. The Library will work in partnership with several of Gloucester's civic and not-for-profit organizations to produce a full schedule of collaborative, informed, issue-oriented public events. In addition, 1623 Studios, a nonprofit community media center located in Gloucester has committed to provide an in-kind donation of up to \$5,000 in production support to film and share The Civic Hub's public forums and events through its online platform and television broadcast channels.

"By creating collaborative events and spaces for respectful, open, and inclusive dialogue on important issues we hope that "The Civic Hub" will help to foster a greater sense of acceptance and understanding throughout our community while helping to improve the vitality of our democracy," added Pocock.

"The Civic Hub" will first explore the divisive issue of "**Immigration and its impact on Gloucester.**" As our country's oldest seaport, Gloucester was home to fishermen and their families emigrating from fishing cultures around the world. New immigrants today are a small but fast-growing minority and are contributing to an already culturally diverse city. With immigration being one of the most prominent wedge issues in America, it makes the discussion all the more critical in our community. Immigration program highlights include:

- On September 21st, "The Civic Hub" will present "One Game One Community Soccer Matchup" celebrating the rich multiculturalism of the Gloucester community. This friendly game between GHS Alumni and Gloucester International will be an opportunity for the vibrant international community to come together to enjoy and celebrate its diversity through the sport of soccer.

- The Civic Hub” will serve as a sponsor of The Gloucester Stage Company's production of "Native Gardens." Together the organizations will facilitate a panel discussion following a stage performance of this critically acclaimed play which explores the issues of racism, and cultural privilege.
- The Library will host a film and speaker series, “The Immigrant Experience" on the first three Wednesday nights in November. This will be a collaboration with Rob Newton from Cape Ann Cinema. Each presentation will followed by a moderated discussion.
- Also in November, SFL in collaboration with Wellspring will debut “Portraits of Cape Ann Immigrants” at the Library. This collection of photos and first-hand stories collected by author Miriam Weinstein of Wellspring's ELOS students will highlight the diverse, powerful, and inspirational experiences of Cape Ann immigrants. The exhibit will be on view through December.

“The Civic Hub" will then focus on "**Journalism and the Public Trust**" beginning in the new year. In these divided times, it's common to mistrust the news industry and label as "fake news" any facts that may not align with one's one viewpoint. An Ipsos poll released in August of last year showed that 37% of the American public thought that the New York Times was unreliable. Rebuilding trust in any particular field or relationship is a process. Good conversation is required to understand the role a free and trusted press must play in any democratic society. Program highlights to include:

- "The Civic Hub" will host local newsmakers including but not limited to Andrew Metz: FRONTLINE’s Managing Editor, David Olson: a local newspaper editor, John McElhenny: a former Boston Globe reporter, and Danielle Denman: the Gloucester High School newspaper editor in a panel discussion followed by a question and answer period on the topic Journalism and the Public Trust.

In April, "The Civic Hub" will then take on the timely subject of "**The Rising Ocean.**" Gloucester's proximity to the ocean is essential to its future as well as its past. As a coastal community, Gloucester is hugely vulnerable to extreme weather events. Much work has been done by Gloucester's Community Development Department to prepare for these emergencies. But, they have found relaying critical information about essential services to the large senior population in Gloucester is challenging yet, communication between the teen population is instantaneous. Currently, the Library is working with the Gloucester High School and the city's community planners to consider for multigenerational discussions on communication issues. Details on these events are forthcoming.

The MBLC developed this direct grant program using federal funding to help libraries meet local community needs including programs that help New Americans learn English and become citizens, STEM and STEAM projects, programs that serve teen needs, and projects that preserve valuable historical documents. The MBLC also offers grants to increase access to library services for people with disabilities.

In addition to the direct library grant program, the MBLC uses LSTA funds to support statewide programs and services including summer reading programs, research databases, the statewide eBook program, the Commonwealth Catalog and mass.gov/libraries which has information and resources for residents. LSTA is administered on the federal level by the [Institute of Museum and Library Services](http://www.imls.gov) and in the Commonwealth by the MBLC. More information about LSTA can be found on Board's website at www.mass.gov/mblc.

Through its hundreds of free programs, it offers each year SFL strives to redefine itself as Gloucester's center for ideas and exploration that support personal advancement, provide opportunities for civic engagement and strengthen the fabric of the community they serve. For more information on the Sawyer Free Library and “The Civic Hub’s” programming, please visit SawyerFreeLibrary.org

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About IMLS: The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](http://www.imls.gov) (IMLS) is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s approximately 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Our mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Our grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/imls), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/imls) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/imls).

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