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$53,544 Grant Strengthening Hennepin County Library Services to Families Affected by Incarceration

Hennepin County Library is building on its 30-year history of providing outreach to adults and juveniles in corrections facilities by creating library programming and resources to help families affected by incarceration cope with the many challenges they face.

The Library is also raising community awareness of unique issues for families affected by incarceration.

The work is supported, in part, by $53,544 from the Minnesota Department of Education through a Library Services and Technology Act grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Friends of the Hennepin County Library, the Library’s nonprofit partner, was selected in July to receive the grant funding on behalf of the Library. The mission of Friends of HCL is to enrich the resources and enhance the potential of Hennepin County Library.

“The Library is an incredible resource for incarcerated parents and their families to participate in shared programs that promote literacy and academic success,” said Kristi Pearson, Friends of the Hennepin County Library Executive Director.

“Our current grant-funded work is filling a gap by focusing on meeting the needs of children during the time their parents are in prison,” said Lois Langer Thompson, Hennepin County Library Director. “Hennepin County Library has a history of successful outreach programs such as Read to Me, which emphasizes the value of reading aloud and creates a bridge through books between incarcerated parents and their children at home.”

The Annie E. Casey Foundation estimates that 5 percent of Minnesota children—67,000 total—have had a parent in jail or prison at some point in their childhood.

“Mass incarceration has had profound impacts on families across the nation, including here in Minnesota,” said Dan Marcou, Hennepin County Library Corrections Librarian. “I am confident that with this grant, we will demonstrate that libraries can play a significant role in helping to address the many needs of parents who are incarcerated or on parole, as well as needs of their children and family members.”

Look for more news on the Hennepin County Library website: www.hclib.org/news