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## Press Release

**The 2017 Illinois Library Association Intellectual Freedom Award is awarded to the Hinsdale Public Library. The award, presented by the ILA Intellectual Freedom Committee, recognizes an individual or group for outstanding contributions in defending intellectual freedom or the advancement of these principles. The award is sponsored by Quality Books, Inc. (QBI).**

2017 was a tumultuous year, one where the First Amendment has been used as an excuse to say and do a lot of things one might wish it would not protect, and a time when we sometimes forget what it cost those who came before us. This year the ILA Intellectual Freedom Committee is pleased to honor not someone who suffered for the cause but a group, which achieved a positive and uplifting win. Last fall, Hinsdale Public Library partnered with their local Independent newspaper to bring to the public a profoundly moving musical program which champions the First Amendment by celebrating how far we have come and how much we have already overcome for this invaluable right. In a time when any library might reasonably question whether an event is going to be a possible “conflict,” or raise a “red flag,” this library staff didn’t pause but instead pushed forward to remind us that the right to express oneself can be enjoyable and uniting instead of dangerous and dividing.

Using funds gifted to the Library’s Foundation from the Reva and David Logan Foundation, funds which could have been used for any purpose, the library chose to promote Intellectual Freedom by hosting a musical event called “Freedom Sings®” which celebrates this freedom through song. The narration and live vocal performances feature music that has been banned or censored or has sounded a call for social change. Through the efforts of everyone on staff, this inspiring evening offered people a new perspective on the songs of patriotism and protest that have shaped an ever-changing America. In addition to performing at the library, which supported the travel cost burden alone, the group also was able to partner with the PTO and performed at the High School the same day, teaching the next generation about the long road we have traveled for social changes and freedom.

Originally discussed as a program to honor Veterans, the program was scheduled instead just one week after the national election. Providing an opportunity for the community to come together and see and hear the way Americans have raised their voices to celebrate progress or cry for change also allowed them a chance to connect with one another at the end of a confusing and contentious week. The outcome was that on that lovely Friday night, when the competition included new blockbuster movies and dinner out, a diverse group of over 150 people of all ages spent the evening celebrating Intellectual Freedom, and as the Director noted, “They saw us. Our audience, our neighbors, our patrons, our friends, saw the Hinsdale Public Library as an anchor for tolerance and education in their community. They saw us as a safe space for civic discourse. They saw a public place where singing had replaced shushing and every voice was welcome.”

The Intellectual Freedom Award will be presented at the Awards Luncheon held on Tuesday, October 10, during the 2017 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference in Tinley Park.

For further information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

For Immediate Release