

beyond words



2025

MAGAZINE



Commitment

**Working together.
Stronger together.**

At Travelers, a culture of involvement and spirit of unity inspire us to celebrate the communities around us.



travelers.com/community

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welcome to beyond words

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Beyond Words 2025, Hartford Public Library's annual celebration of the transformative power of libraries and the communities they serve. We are so grateful that you are here with us tonight. Friends, supporters, and champions who share our belief that libraries are far more than buildings filled with books. They are places of connection, opportunity, and hope.

This year's event is significant as we mark two remarkable milestones in our shared journey. We celebrate 25 years of The American Place, a pioneering program that has empowered thousands of immigrants, refugees, and new Americans to build brighter futures through education, citizenship, and community. We also honor 10 years of Beyond Words, a decade of gathering together to lift up the Library's mission and affirm the role of storytelling, learning, and creativity in shaping Hartford's future.

As we reflect on these achievements, we also look ahead, with optimism and purpose, to the next chapter. Hartford Public Library remains committed to innovation, inclusion, and inspiration.

Together, we will continue to expand access to knowledge, nurture understanding across cultures, and strengthen the heart of our community.

Thank you for being part of this celebration and for standing beyond words with us—believing in what libraries make possible.

With gratitude and determination ,



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bridget E. Quinn".

Bridget E. Quinn
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Taylor".

Karen Taylor
Chair, Board of Directors

Celebrating
— 25 YEARS —
Hartford Public Library
beyond words
2025
&
The American Place



The Mandell-Braunstein Families

program

WELCOME

KEYNOTE

Ocean Vuong with Thea Montanez

THE AMERICAN PLACE 25TH YEAR TRIBUTE

FUND THE MISSION

CAROLYN M. HEWINS AWARD

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

CLOSING



sponsors

PRESENTING



THE AMERICAN PLACE

Mandell-Braunstein Family Foundation

CAROLINE M. HEWINS



BOOK



NOVEL



POETRY

Eversource
Legrand
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TKSP

CHAPTER

Fire by Forge
Liberty Bank

individual sponsors and donors

NOVEL TABLES

Beth and Rick Costello
Marilda Gándara and Scott O'Keefe
Phyllis Shikora and Doug Cohen

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Bradley Harper and Scott Walter
Dan and Angela O'Shea
Susan Holmes and Bessy Reyna
Hartford Healthcare, SINA, and Trinity College
UCONN Hartford

INDIVIDUAL TABLES

James and Susan Finnegan
Karen Fitzgerald
Carlos Galdamez
Mary LaPorte
Sara and Edward Lashetski
Margaret and Robert Patricelli (2)

Bridget E. Quinn
Gilda Roncari
TAP Table
Gerri and Tim Sullivan
Rachel Taylor

CHAPTER TABLES

Floyd W. Greene III
Lois and Edward Lewis
Donna Stout

PATRON TICKETS

Elizabeth Appleman
Michele Brophy
Catherine and Terry D'Italia
Karl Fisher
Frank Hagaman
Hannah Granfield-Horton and Barnaby Horton
Marian Kellner and Tim McLaughlin

Diane Mack (3)
Leah and Stewart Murchie
Brewster Perkins
Brie Quinby and Evan Cowles
Christina and Ezra Ripple
Charles and Elizabeth Stewart
Allan and Sally Taylor
Karen Taylor



You're an inspiration to us all

Hartford Public Library is making a difference in our community.

Serving as a hub for learning is just one of the many ways you connect neighbors and support families. Extending your abilities and resources throughout the community with collaboration, creativity, and compassion makes you a true leader.

We're proud to support Hartford Public Library.

Visit us at **bankofamerica.com/hartford**

Caroline M. Hewins medalist



This year, the honor will be presented to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for their transformative grantmaking and deep commitment to equity and public service. The award recognizes those who provide revolutionary service to Hartford and champion equal access to opportunity—values that HFPG exemplifies.

THE CAROLINE M. HEWINS MEDAL

The extraordinary civic example and life of Caroline M. Hewins, the revolutionary librarian who helped create Hartford Public Library and who significantly enlarged the very idea of the public library in America, deserves a wider audience. Ms. Hewins believed that everyone should have a library card and access to books. The book itself now has many more forms, but what it represents—learning and opportunity—has never been more important. The Caroline M. Hewins Medal recognizes an individual or organization who embraces the City of Hartford and its people, who breaks the mold and provides service of a revolutionary kind, who stretches the boundaries of a social or cultural institution with a humanistic approach to public service, and who shows strong guardianship of and advocacy for the basic right of equal access to information and opportunity.

PAST CAROLINE HEWINS MEDALISTS



2016

LOUISE BLALOCK

Former HPL Chief Librarian, 1994–2008



2017

SHARON R. O'MEARA †

Director of Community Investment, HFPG—for support of The American Place



2018

SANDY & HOWARD † FROMSON

Hartford artists, entrepreneurs and philanthropists



2019

TAI SOO KIM

Award winning Hartford architect and philanthropist



2023

LUKE BRONIN

former Hartford Mayor and HPL Board Member

† - Deceased



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is a Proud Sponsor of the

Hartford Public Library: Beyond Words 2025



At Ares, we envision a world in which all people benefit from equitable access to knowledge, resources, and opportunities so that they can achieve their full potential.

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TSKP STUDIO proudly supports
Hartford Public Library's
Beyond Words 2025:

*Celebrating 25 Years of
The American Place!*

We create spaces where
**communities gather
& stories unfold.**

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thank you to our committee


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more info!



HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY



**THE KAMAN FOUNDATION
PRESENTS**

**BABY GRAND
JAZZ**

at
Hartford
Public
Library



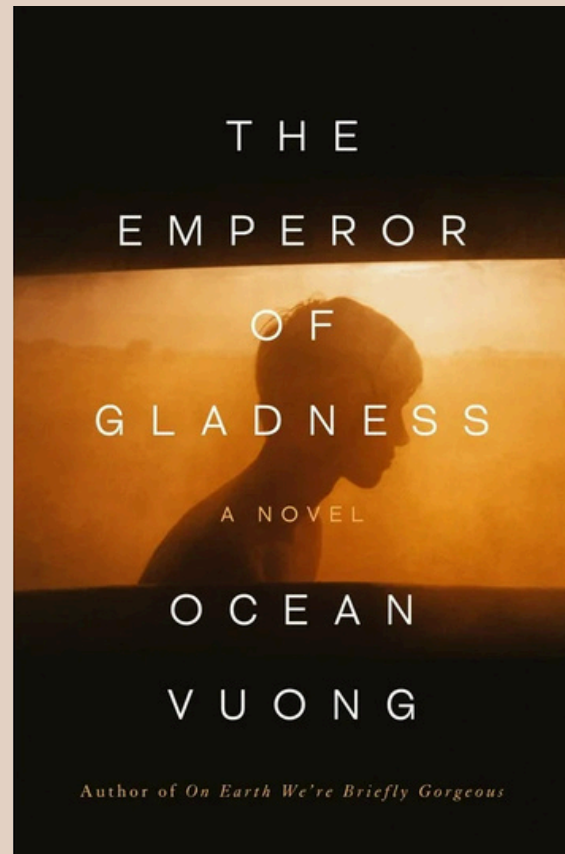
Legrand is proud to support
Hartford Public Library and the Beyond Words event.

Founded in 2014, our Better Communities program improves lives through volunteerism and philanthropy.

Our volunteers support local non-profits in three focal areas:
Better Homes & Neighborhoods, Better Schools, and Better Well-Being.



thank you to tonights author



We want to welcome Ocean Vuong to Hartford Public Library's Beyond Words and thank HPL Ambassador Thea Montañez for talking with Ocean onstage tonight!



HOMA NAFICY

WHEN YOU'RE A LIBRARIAN, A LOT OF YOUR JOB IS ANSWERING QUESTIONS.



MAYBE A CONVERSATION STARTS WITH A SIMPLE REFERENCE QUESTION.



OR ONE THAT'S NOT SO SIMPLE.

HOW MANY CHROMOSOMES ARE IN A RADISH?



BUT SOONER OR LATER, THE CONVERSATION TURNS PERSONAL, AND YOU START LOOKING FOR WAYS TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS TOGETHER.

¿CÓMO REGISTRO A MI HIJO EN LA ESCUELA?



¡HOLA!



AND THAT'S WHERE I COME IN.

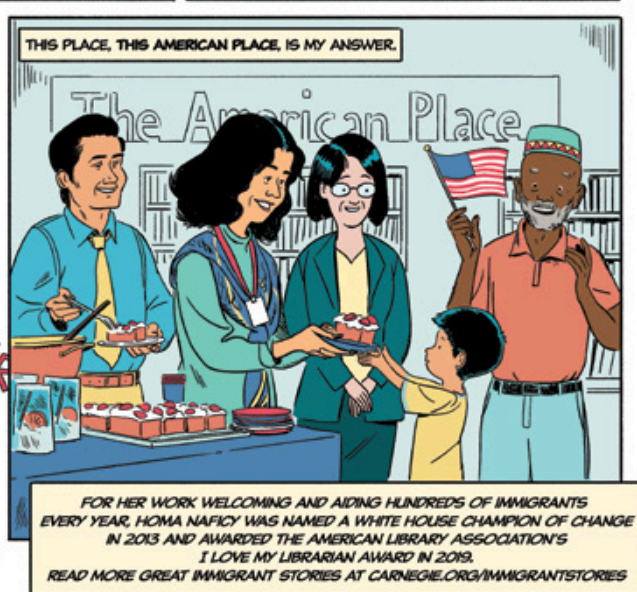
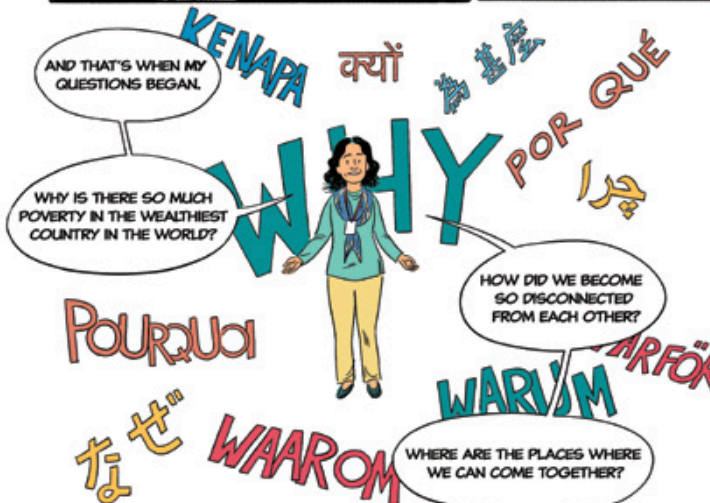
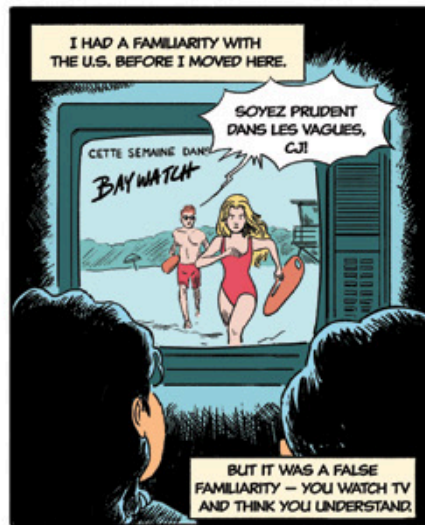
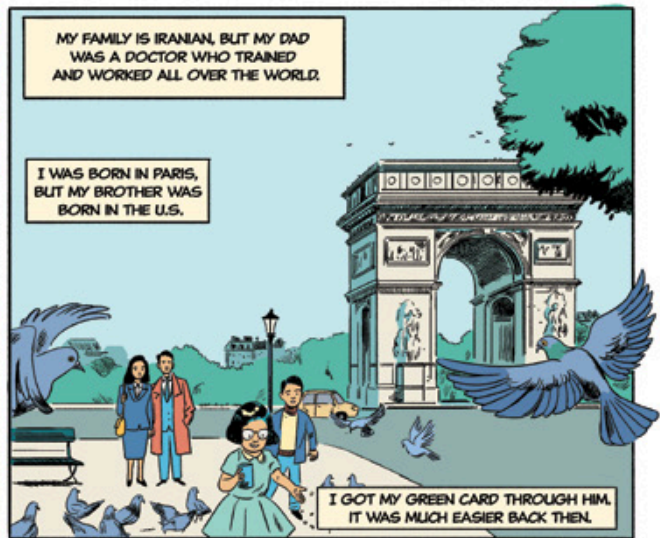
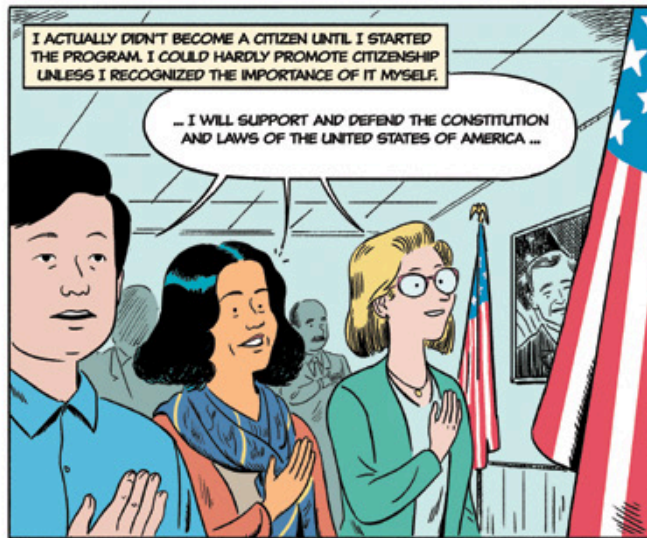
I STARTED THE AMERICAN PLACE AT THE HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY IN 2000, AFTER MANY YEARS OF ANSWERING QUESTIONS AS A REFERENCE LIBRARIAN.

The American Place



I BUILT THE PROGRAM FROM THE GROUND UP, WITH THE GOAL OF HELPING OUR CITY'S IMMIGRANT POPULATION IN WHATEVER WAY WE CAN.

WE OFFER JOB TRAINING AND LANGUAGE LESSONS, AND HOST NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES COMPLETE WITH BAGPIPERS AND A SCHOOL CHOIR SINGING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.



*IN 2023, 35% OF ALL 42.2 MILLION IMMIGRANT ADULTS AGES 25 AND OLDER HAD A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER, A RATE SIMILAR TO THAT OF U.S.-BORN ADULTS. SOURCE: FREQUENTLY REQUESTED STATISTICS ON IMMIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE, MARCH 2025



THE HEART OF CONNECTICUT'S CAPITAL CITY

A federally designated Minority Serving Institution that emphasizes equity, justice, and community collaboration, UConn Hartford is proud to partner with local institutions including Hartford Public Library to engage our students, enhance the lives of Hartford citizens, and uplift the neighborhood and city we call home.

UConn
HARTFORD

hartford.uconn.edu

Serving the neighborhoods where we work and live.

We are proud to support this year's **Beyond Words** fundraiser, benefiting the Hartford Public Library and celebrating their critical role in our community.

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Talcott Financial Group is proud to support the Hartford Public Library's commitment to literacy, community, and connection.



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Every meal supports hands-on job training and helps expand access to healthy food in Hartford.



SCAN ME

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Public Library
thrive for another
250 years.

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Cheers!



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“Hartford Public Library is the heart of Hartford.”

— Howard Fromson

Skin and Bones
sculpture by Howard Fromson

Harcourt Wood Memorial Library

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350th ANNIVERSARY

1675-2025

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derbypubliclibrary.org



In honor of Hilda Gándara, who worked tirelessly for a new Park Street Library



With love,

*Marilda Gándara
& Scott O'Keefe*

**CONNECTING.
COMMUNITY.**



Comcast is honored to support Hartford Public Library's *Beyond Words* event and recognizes the Library's vital role in empowering individuals, strengthening neighborhoods, and fostering lifelong learning throughout the city.

We're proud to stand alongside an institution that continues to make a meaningful impact in the community.



Times change. What matters hasn't.

Since 1825, **Liberty Bank** has been dedicated to helping families throughout Connecticut. Two hundred years later, we're here to improve the lives of our customers, teammates and communities - today and for generations to come.

We are delighted to partner with organizations like the **Hartford Public Library** that share our commitment, and help make our communities great places to live and work. We are proud to sponsor the **Beyond Words** fundraiser and help support The Library's commitment to literacy, connection, and community.



CELEBRATING
200
— YEARS —



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RACHELIA COVILLE

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hartford public library leadership

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25 years of the american place



*The American Place coordinator, Homa Naficy, celebrates receiving her citizenship.
Photo by Marlene Melcher*



**We're putting
our heart into
this community –
today and
every day.**

At The Hartford, helping people and supporting our communities is at the heart of what we do. It's why we're proud to support the Hartford Public Library.



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