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PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Library Director Paula Kiely Announces Retirement

MILWAUKEE (July 6, 2020) – Milwaukee Public Library Director Paula A. Kiely today announced her intent to retire this summer, capping off a rewarding and impressive 25-year career with MPL where she led the reinvention of the physical library as a flexible, technology-rich, people-first environment through innovative mixed-use development of new branch libraries and remodeling projects at Central Library and other branches.

Outside of the physical spaces, Kiely will be remembered for her impact of the library on preschool development through programs like Books2Go, and the Office of Early Childhood Development housed at Central Library. She elevated teen services with dedicated spaces for teens, including Makerspaces at the Mitchell Street and soon-to-be-opened Good Hope branch libraries. Through an historic partnership with Milwaukee Public Schools and the Mayor’s Office, she led the creation of LibraryNow which put nearly 80,000 library cards in the hands of Milwaukee students to access resources wherever they are.

“It has been my honor and a true privilege to serve as City Librarian for the past 14 years, after first being appointed to the role by Mayor Tom Barrett in September of 2006,” said Kiely. **“This is a hard decision, especially during these challenging times, but it’s time to focus on my family. There has never been a day where my work at the library wasn’t focused on elevating and enriching the lives of the residents of our great city. Now there is an opportunity for the city to bring fresh leadership to the library.”**

“Throughout her career, Paula has been a model of servant leadership,” said Milwaukee Public Library Board Chairwoman Dr. Michele Bria. **“She focused on the community and meeting particular neighborhood needs and interests, while ensuring equity of access. She is hardworking, persistent, and has always worked for what was best for the library and the people it serves.”**

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Kiely also led efforts for green initiatives including the creation of a green roof and installation of solar panels at Central Library. Solar panels were also installed at Tippecanoe and Center Street branches, and numerous efforts to control storm water are also underway, including rain gardens and parking lot resurfacing. She challenged people's perception of the library as an old, dusty place where visitors would be "shushed" into a modern, welcoming and entertaining space with the Library Loud Campaign which brought a hip-hop concert, a haunted house, a Mexican wrestling match, and a rap battle all to the library. Kiely was also successful in bringing the first StoryCorps Outpost outside of New York City to Milwaukee in 2007.

"Paula Kiely embodies the notion of the public library as an enduring institution because of its constant evolution," said Mayor Tom Barrett. **"Her emphasis on literacy of all kinds – digital, reading, financial – led to increases in electronic resources, WiFi, laptops, computer classes, job labs and the addition of Career Online High School. Through her leadership, MPL streamlined operations with adoption of RFID, Self-Check-out, and automated book returns and increased access for all residents."**

Kiely continued, **"I am especially thankful to Mayor Barrett for his trust, confidence, and support. I am also grateful for the support and commitment of the Board of Trustees, our Friends and Foundation, and public servants who are committed to our community and enriching the lives of all residents of every age."**

Before she leaves at the end of August, Kiely intends to prepare the library for a full restoration of services; complete the work of a Board task force on financial sustainability, and continue to advance MPL's work toward social justice and racial equality."

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About the Milwaukee Public Library

Milwaukee Public Library is an anchor institution that helps build healthy families and vibrant neighborhoods – the foundation of a strong Milwaukee. Since 1878, Milwaukee Public Library has been a free provider of education and information for residents of Milwaukee and beyond. With 14 locations, and nearly three million items in circulation, MPL offers free access to a rich collection of materials both physical and digital, access to technology, classes, exhibitions, programming and more. From toddlers to scholars, MPL serves more than one million patrons who come through its doors annually and many more around the globe who use its resources at www.mpl.org. To offer this wide array of free programming, MPL relies on both public and private funding. Learn more about how to support Milwaukee Public Library at mpl.org/support.