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## Wisconsin Libraries Launch Campaign To “Keep Us *All* In A Better State”

MADISON—The Wisconsin Library Association Foundation (WLAF) will launch its Campaign For Wisconsin Libraries at the state capitol first floor rotunda Tuesday at noon to promote a better understanding of how libraries contribute to the state’s economic growth, education and lifelong learning, and the quality of life in Wisconsin. The news conference to launch the Campaign will be held during Library Legislative Day, and nearly 200 library supporters from across the state are expected in the Capitol.

“We live in a knowledge-based economy, where life-long learning is mandatory,” WLAF Board President Rick Krumwiede said. “Public, academic, special and school libraries are essential institutions that contribute greatly to the quality of life in this state.”

In a time of budgetary constraints, it’s more important than ever to remind citizens and decision-makers about the value of libraries in order to maintain the remarkable institutions we have here, according to Krumwiede.

“A campaign for library advocacy throughout the state of Wisconsin is sorely needed to raise awareness and gain support,” Krumwiede said. “We’re calling on all residents and the media to join our effort to give libraries this much needed voice. Together, we have the power to ensure that libraries continue to be essential institutions in our democratic society.”

To inspire Wisconsin residents to “Support Wisconsin Libraries: Keep Us *All* In A Better State,” the WLAF has created the Campaign For Wisconsin Libraries. The Campaign will provide a collective voice for Wisconsin libraries of all types and will focus on developing and disseminating effective messages about the importance of Wisconsin’s libraries. By centralizing promotional activities at the state level, the Campaign will benefit all Wisconsin libraries including those with limited resources. The WLAF has a goal of raising \$100,000 annually to support the Campaign. These funds will not be used for lobbying or political advocacy.

The WLAF is sending a series of humorous public service announcements to newspapers and radio stations throughout the state. Some of the radio spots spoof the stereotypical image of the serious librarian by asking for support, “so librarians won’t have to become calendar girls.” Another features a librarian talking over provocative music while posing the question, “Do you really want to see what this male librarian looks like in a Speedo?”

People can become a partner in the Campaign for Wisconsin’s Libraries by making a tax deductible gift to the Wisconsin Library Association Foundation, talking to their local librarian or visiting the Campaign’s Web site, [www.WisconsinLibraries.org](http://www.WisconsinLibraries.org).

(MORE)

## Fact sheet

The WLAFF and their supporters say that libraries are life-changing institutions.

- Every tax dollar we invest in library services pays us back an average of four dollars in economic benefits to our communities.
- More people visit libraries than buy tickets for state football, basketball and hockey events combined – 38.9 million library visits versus 5.3 million ticket sales.
- The Interlibrary Loan System grew 800 percent in the last 15 years to keep pace with change and give every Wisconsin resident equal access to a world of information. Despite all this growth, the State's share of support of libraries actually declined during this period.
- Libraries provide priceless information for everything from launching a new career to growing a business.
- Wisconsin libraries spark the imagination and empower citizens to make smart choices to better their lives.

However, libraries' ability to continue playing such an important role is increasingly threatened.

- While Wisconsin public libraries rank in the top 10 nationally for circulation and visits, we've slipped to 19<sup>th</sup> in funding.
- A University of Wisconsin System initiative to enhance library service has not been funded, despite the increasing challenge of maintaining world-class information services to students and faculty, as well as Wisconsin businesses, government agencies and citizens.
- In communities across the state, schools are reducing their professional library staff, at the expense of student achievement.
- Special libraries provide vital services behind the scenes that keep business, medicine, law and other fields on the cutting edge – but librarians are some of the first positions cut in a fiscal crisis.

The Wisconsin Library Association Foundation's mission is to support the role of Wisconsin libraries as essential institutions in a democratic society. WLAFF engages in a number of activities including support for scholarships, awards and honors, and special projects. All of the more than 2,000 members of the Wisconsin Library Association are automatically members of WLAFF. However, each organization has a separate Board of Directors and is separately funded. Individuals can support WLAFF and the Campaign with annual contributions or with planned giving.

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