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Coney Island Library Reopens After Hurricane Sandy

All Six Storm-Damaged Brooklyn Public Library Branches Now Open and Equipped with Improved Amenities, Technology & Infrastructure

Salvaged Pieces of Coney Island Boardwalk Integrated into Library Ceiling; Photo Exhibit Shows Scenes from Coney Island's History

Brooklyn, NY – Today Brooklyn Public Library proudly reopened the Coney Island Library and invited the public to enjoy their new and improved branch, which includes new technology, more public space and innovative design features centered on Coney Island history. State Senator Diane Savino and Council Member Domenic Recchia joined Brooklyn Public Library President & CEO Linda E. Johnson in opening ceremony festivities.

“Among our branches, the worst of the damage from Hurricane Sandy occurred at Coney Island Library, which was flooded by five feet of water. Since the storm, we have completely renovated the building, making it ADA-compliant, reconfigured the interior, created new meeting rooms and added new technology throughout. It has taken a tremendous amount of work, but today we are thrilled to welcome the Coney Island community back to their beautifully renovated neighborhood library,” said Linda E. Johnson, President & CEO of Brooklyn Public Library.

“Extra! Extra! ‘Read’ all about it! The Coney Island Library is back and better than ever! Thanks to the incredible team at Brooklyn Public Library, headed by President and CEO Linda Johnson, for their tireless work after Superstorm Sandy in transforming this community hub into a space that embraces Coney Island’s history and will stand to make our whole borough proud for generations to come. I’m particularly pleased that this branch is now ADA-compliant, allowing every Coney Islander to access a wealth of literature and knowledge that makes us richer as a culture. The future of Brooklyn depends on the education of our residents, which all stems from a passion for reading. Whether you are young or young at heart, a bookworm or a casual reader, there will be something for everyone at the new Coney Island Library,” said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz.

“Approximately one year ago Mother Nature dealt a devastating blow to many of our most cherished institutions including the Coney Island library. But New Yorkers are resilient, particularly in the face of adversity, and its re-opening is another testament to our ability to strongly recover. I salute Linda Johnson and her team for bringing our branch roaring back to life,” said Congressman Hakeem Jeffries.

“This is yet another positive sign in the comeback of Coney Island from Superstorm Sandy. Maybe one day someone will write a book about the resiliency of spirit on Coney Island and it will be available for all to read in the Coney Island Library,” said State Senator Diane Savino.

“As one of the neighborhoods hit hardest by Superstorm Sandy, Coney Island has displayed great strength and resilience in recovering over the past year. As libraries change to meet the evolving needs of their communities, I’m pleased to see one of Coney Island’s bedrock institutions come back in a way that both restores what was

temporarily lost and adds smart new amenities,” said Councilman Domenic M. Recchia, Jr., who represents Coney Island. “As the last library to reopen since the storm, today’s event marks a big step on the road to recovery.”

“Our libraries are the focal point of our communities: they not only circulate books but also teach ESOL classes, host job training workshops and provide spaces for community groups to meet. I’m so grateful for the work that Linda Johnson and her team at the Brooklyn Public Library have done to bring back the Coney Island branch and to restore full library service to the Borough of Brooklyn after all of the damage of Hurricane Sandy,” said Councilman Vincent J. Gentile.

The project, completed with Westerman Construction and design partners Beatty Harvey Coco Architects, cost a total of \$2.7 million, including \$2 million for design and construction and the rest for IT, furniture and collections. Brooklyn Public Library received a \$300,000 grant from the AIG Disaster Relief Fund to support post-Sandy renovations and a \$250,000 grant from the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City to help replace lost or damaged collections and circulation materials.

“Helping customers and communities recover and rebuild from disasters is at the very core of our business,” said AIG Property Casualty President and CEO Peter Hancock. “That we are able to deliver this money to these organizations demonstrates not only tremendous partnership within our own organization and local communities, but also our steadfast commitment to providing support and relief to those who need it most.”

“The Brooklyn Public Library system provides an invaluable network of resources to New Yorkers, and many branches served as critical support hubs in the wake of Hurricane Sandy,” said Megan Sheekey, President of the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City. “The Mayor’s Fund is proud to participate in this public-private effort to reopen the Coney Island Library and ensure that this treasured community asset can continue to serve the residents of Coney Island.”

Across the system, library officials used this rebuilding opportunity to develop Coney Island and other storm-damaged branches into more modern and better-equipped facilities. The new Coney Island Library includes:

- A new ceiling structure in the main corridor that incorporates **salvaged pieces of the Coney Island Boardwalk**;
- A **photomural of historical Coney Island photos** from BPL’s Brooklyn Collection;
- **Technology upgrades**, including ten new, Wi-Fi equipped computers for adults and teens, four computers for children, and two new printers;
- Two newly dedicated **public spaces for children, teens and adults**, and two new public multipurpose rooms available for meetings and programs;
- New **age-specialized furniture, including colorful floor cushions donated by IglooPlay**, and board books for children;
- Full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, ensuring **wheelchair accessibility** in the building and bathrooms;
- Eight new computers for staff, as well as new staff work rooms, bathrooms, pantries and furniture.

Of the six Brooklyn Public Library branches damaged by Hurricane Sandy, Coney Island Library was hit hardest. The entire first floor had to be gutted and the boiler, elevator, electrical and HVAC systems were either damaged or completely destroyed. Materials and furniture were discarded due to flooding, including nearly 20,000 books and other collection items. The branch required extensive renovations and equipment replacements, including new flooring, plumbing, heating and cooling systems, shelving and electrical systems.

In early 2014, BPL will partner with the not-for-profit organization BRIC to offer patrons of Coney Island Library a selection of two-hour free workshops on video creation, distribution online and on Brooklyn’s public access television channels, and common techniques in digital media making, among other subjects. Classes will be

available via online registration and will be taught by BRIC's professional media instructors. To learn more, visit www.bricartsmedia.org.

About Brooklyn Public Library

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is an independent library system for the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn. It is the fifth largest library system in the United States with 60 neighborhood libraries located throughout the borough. BPL offers free programs and services for all ages and stages of life, including a large selection of books in more than 30 languages, author talks, literacy programs and public computers. BPL's eResources, such as eBooks and eVideos, catalog information and free homework help, are available to customers of all ages 24 hours a day at our website: www.bklynpubliclibrary.org.

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About the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to innovative public-private partnerships. One hundred percent of donations in response to Hurricane Sandy are being dispersed to support relief efforts. In the immediate aftermath of the storm, contributions helped to support the supply and transport of emergency needs including hot food, toiletries, baby supplies, cleaning materials, warm clothing and medications for New Yorkers. The Mayor's Fund is now focused on longer-term rebuilding and restoration efforts, including sponsoring a network of housing counselors and legal service providers to help residents, mold treatment in homes, rebuilding and programs for nonprofit organizations and local businesses affected by the hurricane. For more information, go to www.nyc.gov/fund.

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