



# Press Release

*Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System*  
900 North Ashley Drive ♦ Tampa, FL 33602  
Phone: (813) 273-3652 ♦ FAX: (813) 272-6430 (PR&P)

For more information:

Media Contact: Darlene Harris/Public Relations & Partnerships – (813) 272-5018

## **THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY COOPERATIVE ONE OF 208 ORGANIZATIONS NATIONWIDE SELECTED TO RECEIVE BIG READ GRANT FROM NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS**

### ***Hillsborough County to read and celebrate *Their Eyes Were Watching God* during Big Read project***

**Tampa, FL** – The Hillsborough-County Public Library Cooperative today announced that it has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to host The Big Read in Hillsborough County. The Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative is one of 208 libraries, municipalities, and arts, culture, higher education, and science organizations to receive a grant to host The Big Read from September 2008-June 2009. The Big Read gives communities the opportunity to come together to read, discuss, and celebrate one of 23 selections from American and world literature. The Big Read in Hillsborough County will focus on *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. Activities will take place September 1-30.

The latest Big Read grantees represent 46 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. To date, the NEA has given more than 500 grants to support local Big Read projects.

**“We are pleased to be participating in this worthwhile initiative that enables readers all over to explore and share the celebration of extraordinary American Classic Literature. The partnership with The Big Read, along with schools, museums and media, is a wonderful way to connect people and communities,”** said Joe Stines, Director of Libraries.

“Everything the NEA does we do in partnership. I am delighted to announce our 208 new partners in The Big Read. Some are new to the program, some are returning, but all of them have answered the call to action to get our country reading again,” said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia.

The selected organizations will receive Big Read grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000 to promote and carry out community-based reading programs featuring activities such as read-a-thons, book discussions, lectures, movie screenings, and performing arts events. Participating communities also receive high-quality, free-of-charge educational materials to supplement each title, including Reader’s, Teacher’s, and Audio Guides.

“With this latest round of grants, I am proud to say that The Big Read has supported more than 500 public library partnerships,” said Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the NEA’s lead federal partner for The Big Read. “Through this program, public libraries continue to demonstrate their value in communities as centers of engagement, literacy, and lifelong learning. I am particularly delighted by the innovative public programming born out of library and museum collaborations.”

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The NEA presents The Big Read in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. Support for The Big Read is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.



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For more information about The Big Read please visit [www.neabigread.org](http://www.neabigread.org).

*The Hillsborough County Public Library Cooperative promotes lifelong learning, an informed citizenry, individual intellectual freedom, enhanced quality of life, and broadened horizons for all residents of Hillsborough County through a network of free libraries with open access, a community focus, welcoming environments, a broad range of relevant materials in a variety of formats, and highly qualified, customer-focused employees.*

*The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts—both new and established—bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the nation’s largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).*

*The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. For more information, please visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).*

*Arts Midwest connects people throughout the Midwest and the world to meaningful arts opportunities, sharing creativity, knowledge, and understanding across boundaries. Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest’s history spans more than 25 years. For more information, please visit [www.artsmidwest.org](http://www.artsmidwest.org).*

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