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## **NPower Greater DC Region Honors DC LEARNs with 2006 Technology Innovation Award**

**Cites Use of Web-based Technology in Strengthening D.C.'s Literacy Network**

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**Washington, DC, November 18, 2006** — NPower Greater D.C. Region yesterday awarded its **2006 Technology Innovation Award** to **D.C. LEARNs**, Washington, D.C.'s literacy coalition.

According to NPower, the Technology Innovation Award is the only award to honor nonprofits in the D.C. region for outstanding use of technology. NPower cited D.C. LEARNs' innovative process by which the entire D.C. LEARNs staff is able to update its Web site continuously with literacy-related information and resources.

The D.C. LEARNs Web site (<http://www.dclearns.org>) serves as a clearinghouse of information on literacy programs, policy issues, statistics, job opportunities, and resources. The Web site also hosts the city's only comprehensive calendar of professional training and other literacy-related events.

"It's very gratifying to know that the work we have done is recognized for being innovative," said Jeff Carter, Executive Director of D.C. LEARNs. "I was so impressed by the other finalists for the award, I was kind of shocked when we learned we had won. It's hard to step back and see the work we have done as an outsider might see it. To us, it's a constant struggle to pull all of this together with the limited resources that we have, and as a result we sometimes only focus on the deficiencies, and not the areas where we are succeeding. This award allows all of us to pause and reflect on what we are accomplishing."

D.C. LEARNs maintains a central database of D.C. adult literacy programs and services where District residents can find complete and detailed information about literacy programs. This database is accessible to residents via the D.C. LEARNs Web site. D.C. residents can also access this information via the *Read Out Loud* Literacy Hotline, 1-866-READ-OUT (1-866-732-3688), which is managed by D.C. LEARNs staff. Staff members use the program database to match callers to appropriate literacy services. *Read Out Loud* is Washington, D.C.'s public service campaign designed to help people looking to improve their literacy skills find opportunities and services available here in the District of Columbia.

The transformation of the D.C. LEARNs Web site into a citywide clearinghouse for literacy was initially funded by a grant from the State Education Office for the Government of the District of Columbia in 2003-04. The present site was redesigned from the ground up in 2005 and new additions are being added regularly. The program database has received support from the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Philip L. Graham Fund, Verizon, and many others.

These supporters, notes Carter, not only offer funding support but technical expertise as well. "Our program database, for example, has been modified and tweaked over time," Carter explains, "but the initial programming was provided by staff and consultants from the Fannie Mae Foundation."

DC LEARNs will receive \$10,000 in technology consulting services from NPower and free software valued at \$25,000.

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D.C. LEARNs (<http://www.dclearns.org>) is a nonprofit citywide coalition of more than 80 members (<http://www.dclearns.org/members.html>), most of whom are organizations providing adult, family, and children's literacy services to the residents of Washington, D.C. Our mission is to work with these organizations to strengthen adult, family, and children's literacy services and present a strong, unified voice on the importance of literacy as an investment in the community. We work to raise public awareness of literacy issues, recruit volunteers, and provide the materials, research, training, and technical assistance needed to raise the quality of literacy services available to D.C. residents.

Our vision is that Washington, D.C. will become a city where effective and innovative literacy services are available to all, guided by the leadership of the literacy providers themselves, and supported by a community that is committed to the education of all its citizens.

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