



Biblio Bash 2023 Raises Over \$1M for Toronto Public Library

Ensures capacity increase for “Leading to Reading” program across city

Toronto, ON (April 21, 2023) - Last night the Toronto Public Library Foundation (TPLF) smashed fundraising records, reaching an unprecedented \$1,025,400 in support of TPL. Toronto’s library lovers joined business leaders, philanthropists and city builders at Biblio Bash, presented by **Tricon Residential**. Attended by 41 notable authors and over 450 guests, the sold-out black tie gala was dedicated to raising funds for TPL’s *Leading to Reading* Program.

Leading to Reading is a free TPL service that assists children who struggle with reading and pairs students with volunteer tutors to help develop skills, build confidence and make reading a positive experience. This year’s Biblio Bash Committee selected *Leading to Reading* as the on-site fundraising priority for the night and welcomed back **TD Bank Group**, a longtime supporter of kids literacy programs at TPL, as this year’s Community Sponsor.

The Foundation premiered its new *Leading to Reading* short film profiling families and volunteers participating in the program, and the evening’s host, Global News National anchor **Farah Nasser** highlighted that a contribution of \$25,000 can fund the program in one branch, for one year. The Library currently operates 25 *Leading to Reading* programs (out of 100 branches) and intends to support even more children in communities across the city. Generous donors in the room stepped up and raised \$275,000 in immediate donations from the floor, helping TPL surpass \$1million.

Biblio Bash Co-Chairs, Claire MacNamara and Victoria Webster commented in their remarks, “During the pandemic, so many children missed out on the chance to learn to read, and the TPL Foundation wants to help fix that. Tonight at Biblio Bash we are launching the *Leading to Reading* campaign to ensure kids in Toronto get the learning support they need.”

Upon entering the “Biblio Hotel” in the transformed Toronto Reference Library, guests were escorted to the second-floor stacks for drinks and hors d’oeuvres thanks to Cocktail Sponsor **Mantella Corporation**, and enjoyed a spectacular experience in the resort-themed space thanks to Event Sponsor, **Rogers Communications**.

The evening kicked off with a powerful spoken word performance by writers and TPL poetry mentors Shelly Grace Campbell and Desiree Mckenzie. Each dinner table welcomed notable authors thanks to Author Host Sponsor, the **Gerald Sheff and Shanitha Kachan Charitable Foundation**. Writers in attendance included Ann-Marie Macdonald, John Irving, Vincent Lam, Rawi Hage, Souvankhan Thammavongsa, Cadence Weapon (Rollie Pemberton) and Roz Weston. To see the full list of authors visit bibliobash.ca.

Toronto Public Library’s City Librarian Vickery Bowles spoke passionately about the Library’s commitment to protecting and defending Torontonians’ rights to free access to a broad range of diverse materials - including those that have been challenged or banned, while sharing that TPL’s 100 branches and online spaces were recently declared Book Sanctuaries. She said, “It’s never been more important for all of us to stand up and speak out for intellectual freedom and ensure voices, especially those of marginalized and equity-deserving communities, are not shut down.”

Biblio Bash is known for curating exceptional silent auction prizes and this year was no exception. One-of-a-kind experiences included private dinners in Toronto’s finest restaurants with leading Canadian authors, including an intimate evening with Margaret Atwood in the Writers Room at the Park Hyatt Hotel. There were a number of special dining experiences, including dinner at Sushi Masaki Saito, Toronto’s only two Michelin Stars restaurant, as well as generous travel packages courtesy of Porter Airlines. Celebrity photographer George Pimentel’s always popular Portrait Studio was back, capturing the stylish crowd donning the theme of the night, formal with a splash of pink.

Dinner was served in the atrium with a delicious menu developed by The Food Dudes and sponsored by **Labatt Breweries of Canada**. Biblio Bash ended on a sweet and savory note thanks to Dessert Sponsor **Balzac’s** who provided cake and brownies from Dufflet. Guests then enjoyed end of the night burgers and doughnuts thanks to Late Night Treat Sponsor, **The MacNamara Family**.

Hotel sponsor, **The Park Hyatt Toronto** and Airline Sponsor, **Porter Airlines** allowed for a number of out of town authors to travel to Toronto and be part of the celebration. Biblio Bash was also supported by Media Sponsor, **The Toronto Star**.

“On behalf of the Toronto Public Library Foundation, we are grateful for the extraordinary generosity of our Biblio Bash sponsors, attendees and our community of supporters, whose gifts to the library make a meaningful and lasting impact on individuals and families,” said **TPL Foundation CEO, Will Scott**. “As a former educator, I’ve seen first-hand how critical programs like *Leading to Reading* can play a role in our city and last night’s support will ensure the library can expand the program and meet growing community needs.”

Biblio Bash 2023 Sponsors: Presenting Sponsor: Tricon Residential; Community Sponsor: TD Bank; Author Host Sponsor: Gerald Sheff and Shanitha Kachan Charitable Foundation; Event Sponsor: Rogers Communications Inc.; Cocktail Reception Sponsor: Mantella Corporation; Dinner Sponsor: Labatt Breweries of Canada; Dessert Sponsor: Balzacs; Late Night Treat Sponsor: The MacNamara Family; Hotel Sponsor: Park Hyatt Toronto; Airline Sponsor: Porter Airlines; Media Sponsor: The Toronto Star.

Biblio Bash 2023 Committee: Victoria Webster & Claire MacNamara, Co-Chairs; Amanda Alvaro, Sonja Berman, Amy Burstyn-Fritz, Beth Clarkson, Kate Daniels, Laila Deluce, Alison Fiorini, Johnny Goldman, Jennifer Grant, Jane Halverson, Shanitha Kachan, Marissa Kassam, Stuart Keeler, Jen Kirsch, Krystal Koo, Lindsay Mattick, Claire McIntyre, Stephanie Sek, Colette van den Thillart.

For anyone wishing to give back to *Leading to Reading*, the TPL Foundation has officially launched its Spring Community Campaign enabling anyone to contribute to this important cause. A \$25,000 matching gift from a generous TPL Foundation Board Director will double donations made until July 2022. Visit tplfoundation.ca/match23 for details.

For more information about the gala, links to photo albums, videos and the complete list of authors in attendance at Biblio Bash, please visit bibliobash.ca and #BiblioBash and #ImLibraryPeople on social media. Photos by George Pimentel.

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