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Brooklyn Public Library Invests in Language Access for Immigrant Patrons

Apple Bank Partnership Funds Interpretation Service, Multicultural Programs, Multilingual Resources

Brooklyn, NY – February 23, 2016 —Immigrant patrons at Brooklyn Public Library now have access to free interpretation and greater access to library books and services. Thanks to an ongoing partnership with Apple Bank, BPL became the first library system in New York City to offer free interpretation services via telephone in November 2015. With Language Line now available in all 60 Brooklyn libraries, staff can communicate with patrons in over 100 languages.

Language Line’s telephonic reference and referral service allows speakers of different languages to communicate with the assistance of an interpreter. The service is used by staff in various public agencies, including the dispatchers in New York’s 911, 311 call centers and hospitals.

“Nearly half of all Brooklynites speak a language other than English at home,” said **Eva Raison, Brooklyn Public Library’s coordinator of immigrant services**. “Language Line helps our librarians communicate with patrons in the languages spoken by the diverse communities we serve. Language access promotes a welcoming and inclusive environment and enables us to provide life-transforming information resources.”

In the three months since Brooklyn Public Library introduced the Language Line service, librarians at 19 branches have fielded inquiries in 12 different languages. Language Line usage has been most frequent at Central Library, while among the branches, the service has been accessed most often at Cortelyou Library, where librarians assist patrons in Albanian, Bengali, Georgian and Spanish. BPL’s Business & Career Library relies on the service to assist jobseekers and to field questions about the PowerUP! Business Plan Contest, which awards startup funding and provides free resources to Brooklyn entrepreneurs. Systemwide, translation has been requested most often in Spanish, Haitian Creole and French.

Language Line is one of several new BPL initiatives funded by Apple Bank, the second-largest state-chartered savings bank in New York State. The bank has provided the financial support for Brooklyn Public Library to host a monthly series of 10 multilingual family cultural programs in branches throughout the borough. Apple Bank also purchased new ESOL materials and citizenship books for BPL's New Americans Corners, which offer multilingual resources—including naturalization test study aids and information on city, library and legal services—in easily accessible, well-trafficked areas of every public library in New York City.

“We are pleased to partner with the Brooklyn Public Library to bring these vital services to the borough’s growing multilingual community,” said **James Matera, Executive Vice President and Head of Apple Bank's Consumer Banking Division**. “Enhancing access to the vast resources of BPL will enable newer Americans to acquire the knowledge and skills to succeed in this country in the same way that our parents and grandparents did decades ago.”

Apple Bank has been serving New York City’s neighborhoods and its diverse ethnic groups for over 150 years. Today, Apple Bank has 18 branches in Brooklyn and XX throughout the city’s five boroughs.

For more information about Brooklyn Public Library’s many multilingual programs and services, visit bklynlibrary.org/immigrant-services.

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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.bklynlibrary.org.

About Apple Bank

Apple Bank, established in 1863, provides consumer and small business banking services in greater New York through its branch network and online banking service. Apple is the second-largest state chartered savings bank in New York State, with over \$12 billion in assets and 79 branches located in the five boroughs of New York City, Long Island, Westchester and Rockland. Visit us at www.applebank.com.