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California Celebrates 20 Years of Library Literacy Services

Sacramento – On Friday, November 12th the California State Library marked the 20th anniversary of public library literacy services in California with a gala event featuring author Isabel Allende, State Librarian of California, Susan Hildreth, and State Librarian Emeritus Dr. Kevin Starr. Television personality and *California Gold* producer Huell Howser was guest host.

Over 500 librarians, library literacy professionals, adult learners and literacy supporters gathered at the San Jose Fairmont Hotel, to hear Allende, Hildreth and Starr, and to laude the programs in California's libraries that have helped tens of thousands learn to read.

In 1984 the California State Library, using federal funds, created the first literacy for adults program in 27 public libraries. Since 1984, over half a million adults and children have received literacy services in 106 library jurisdictions that cover 300 California communities. Over 25,000 adults annually receive literacy instruction in their local California libraries today.

The California State Library expanded the literacy program to include families in 1988 and, in 1998, established mobile literacy services with a grant from California's Children and Families Commission. In 2000, the California State Library launched reading services for school age children and their families through the English Language Literacy Intensive (ELLI) program.

At the Fairmont gala, organizers premiered a new documentary featuring four adult learners who entered library literacy programs 10 or more years ago. The film, *Literacy*, tells how library literacy programs changed the adult learners' lives.

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