

# National Museum and Center for Service

Case Study: Service is Everywhere in DC

Lamond-Riggs/Lillian J. Huff Library

Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library

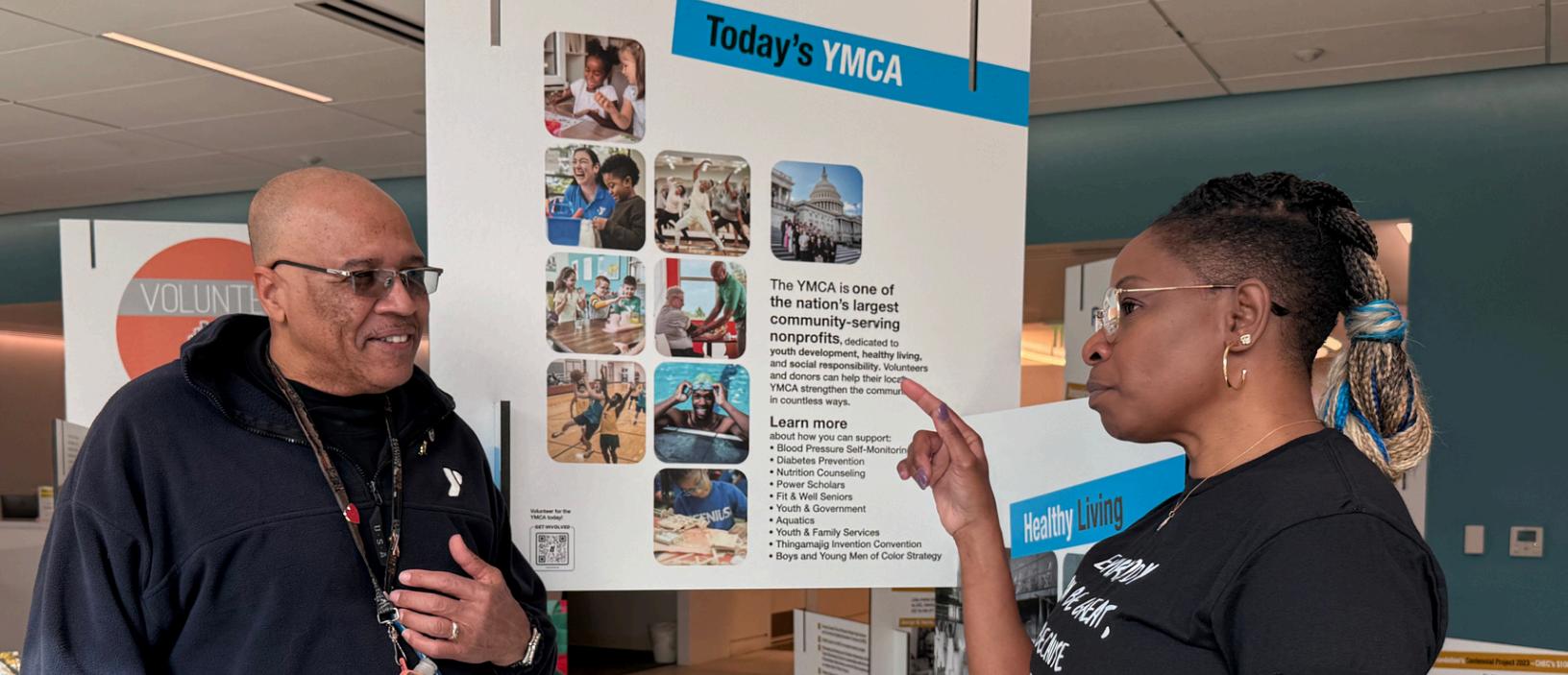
*"Your exhibits are very much needed and they should be displayed at additional locations."*

*"Really good and informative exhibit!"*

*"I thought the interlocking panel design was refreshing and unique."*

*"Loved it!"*

*"Impressive!"*



# Service is Everywhere in DC:

## Celebrating the remarkable individuals and groups who have dedicated themselves to serving the DC community.

**Organizers:** YMCA of Metropolitan Washington (YMCA), National Museum and Center for Service (NMCFS), DC Rotary Club (DC Rotary), DC Public Library (DCPL)

**Dates & Locations:** Lamond-Riggs/Lillian J. Huff Library (LR Library), February 2025 to April 2025; Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (MLK Library), April 2025 to July 2025

**Total Budget:** \$25,000

**Project Team and Partners:** YMCA, NMCFS, DC Rotary, DCPL, Patrick Rogan and Jeanne Krohn (Designers)

# The Spark

## What was the focus of this exhibit?

The *Service is Everywhere in DC* exhibit celebrated the remarkable individuals and groups who have dedicated themselves to serving the DC community. It highlighted their stories, accomplishments, and the impact of their work, with the goal of inspiring others to contribute to the greater good.

## Who were the individuals featured in the exhibit?

The exhibit honored a diverse range of service professionals, including first responders, teachers, healthcare workers, humanitarian aid workers, and volunteers, among others. It also highlighted historical figures and contemporary role models who have made significant contributions through service. In particular, it showcased the work and impact of the DC Rotary Club and the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington.

## Why is this exhibit important?

This exhibit honors the selflessness and dedication of those who serve others. It recognizes their sacrifices and inspires visitors to consider how they can contribute to their communities. It also invites reflection on the values of service, compassion, and responsibility.



The National Museum and Center for Service presents

# Service is Everywhere in DC

A community exhibit

Join us in honoring and inspiring service in ALL its forms.

Lamond-Riggs Neighborhood Library      Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library

January 9th - April 18th      April 21st - June 27th

NATIONAL MUSEUM AND CENTER FOR SERVICE      DC Public Library      the YMCA

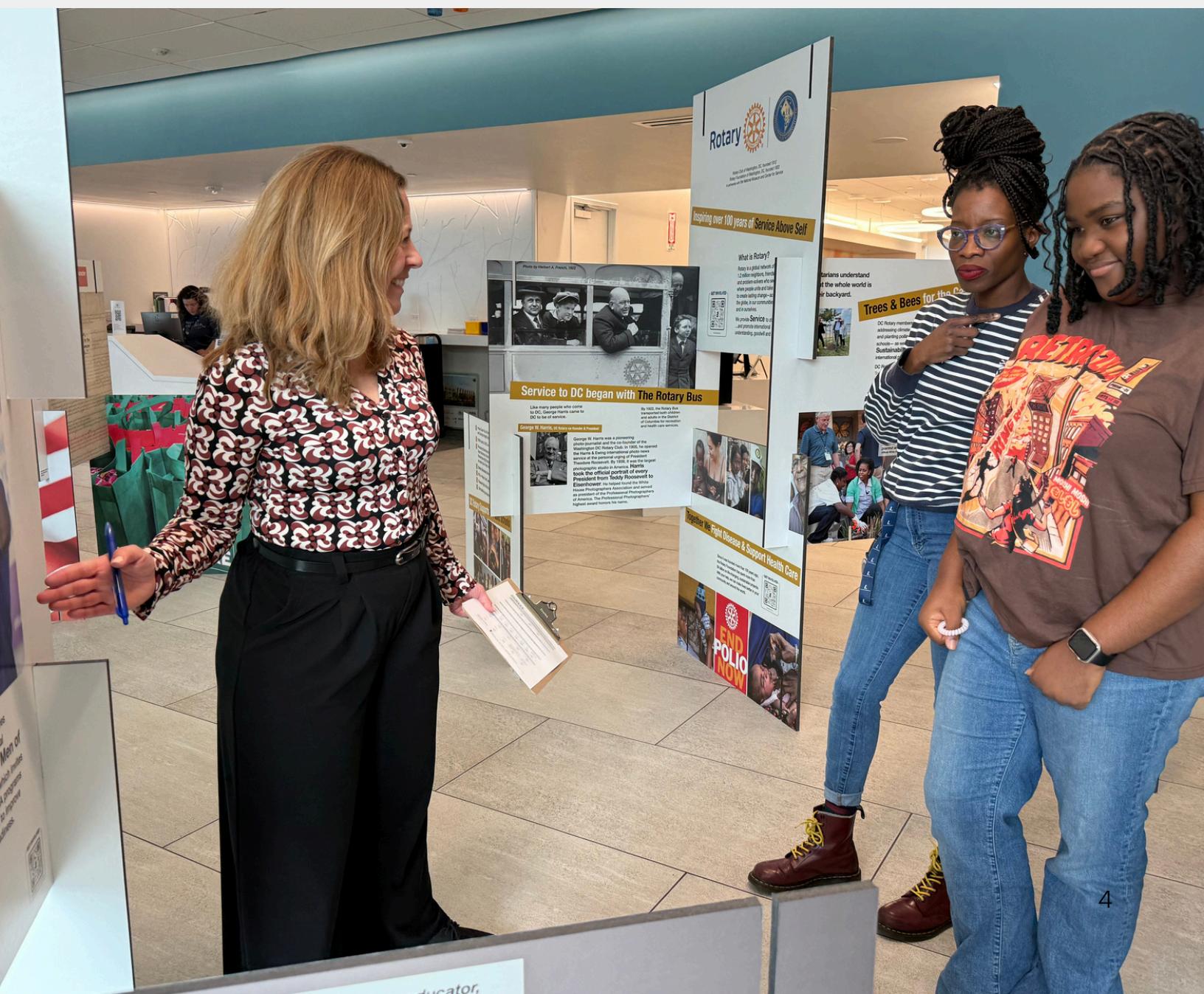
[www.nmcfs.org/serviceiseverywhereindc](http://www.nmcfs.org/serviceiseverywhereindc)



# Community Context

Washington, DC is a vibrant, globally connected city where federal history meets a diverse, thriving culture—home to a dynamic mix of neighborhoods, markets, murals, and a standout food scene that ranges from international eateries to acclaimed fine dining.

DC proper serves roughly 700,000 residents with a diverse racial and ethnic mix, while the greater DC Metropolitan Region is home to 6.3M residents. The city is divided into eight wards, each with distinct character and communities, contributing to DC's political and cultural richness.



## Exhibition Purpose

With a rich history and tradition in American history, public libraries have long been a central hub of services for their local community. Beyond a center for knowledge and literature, libraries offer an open space that brings community members together supporting social infrastructure through events, activities, and services. It's with this conviction that the DCPL's MLK Library, their central hub, served as the epicenter for a first-of-its-kind service exhibition.

Washington, D.C., a place in which thousands of Americans contribute to causes larger than themselves each day, is rich with inspiring stories of service waiting to be told. This exhibition told the stories of local service organizations in hopes of inspiring future generations and helping people connect with opportunities to serve in and strengthen their communities.

DCPL's mission is to provide environments for reading, learning, community discussion, and personal growth, equipping people to learn throughout life and help build a thriving city. As co-creation partners, YMCA and DC Rotary contributed to learning and developing stories for exhibits and events. The YMCA highlighted its legacy as the first African American YMCA in the United States, while DC Rotary shared its impact with local community organizations. The narrative showcases the District's rich history of service and invites residents to participate and contribute their own stories. The exhibit united voices from across the city behind a shared purpose and encouraged broad civic engagement.

An outcome from the project was NMCFS's Community Museums of Service [toolkit](#). The co-creation process proved valuable not only for producing a practical framework but also for advancing learning, deeper understanding, and more inclusive content. By convening a diverse range of stakeholders, the process broadened perspectives, identified gaps in representation, and ensured voices from underrepresented communities were heard and reflected. This collaborative approach enhances relevance and accessibility, fosters shared ownership, and supports iterative learning as content evolves to meet evolving community needs.

## Exhibition Content and Design

The partners worked with designer Patrick Rogan and his non-profit firm Assemble to create panels highlighting stories of service in collaboration with YMCA and the DC Rotary. The resulting interlocking panels could be moved and adjusted to fit each individual space. The display also featured two interactive boards, providing visitors with sticky notes and pencils to answer the questions, *“How are you getting involved and making a difference in your community?”* and *“Whom would you like to honor?”*.

QR codes embedded in the design encouraged visitors to sign up with local service organizations and to discover volunteer opportunities at the national level.

The exhibit was designed to be paired with accompanying events at each location. In April 2025, the YMCA hosted a documentary screening on the life of Andrew Bowen at the Lamond-Riggs Library. In October 2024, NMCFS’s first “Service Symposium” at the MLK Library served as a trial run for the exhibit, which was displayed in the lobby. The event acted as a kickoff for 250 & Beyond, inviting communities to tell their local stories of service for the nation’s semiquincentennial. Exhibit designer Patrick Rogan spoke about the co-creation process and reaffirmed the commitment to presenting stories authentically and meaningfully.



*“It has been a pleasure to support the **Service is everywhere in DC** exhibit at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library. The exhibit has provided our customers with an opportunity to engage, connect, and learn about the impact that service opportunities provide to the community.”*

~ Stacey Lucas, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator for the DC Public Library

# Roles

## **Project Coordinator**

Oversees the co-creation process, schedules meetings, gathers materials, and communicates across all parties.

*Service is Everywhere in DC:* Annette Weichlein

## **Community Host Partner**

A community partner who will host the exhibit and actively participate in the co-creation process.

*Service is Everywhere in DC:* DCPL

## **Exhibition Creation Partners**

Community partners engaged in co-creating the exhibition narrative, providing stories and content; coordinating related events, staff volunteers as docents, and handling setup, transportation, and teardown.

*Service is Everywhere in DC:* YMCA, Rotary

## **Advisory Council**

A group of local community leaders with diverse expertise who advise on the creation process, content, marketing and overall success of the project.

*Service is Everywhere in DC:* Monica Holman Evans, May O'Brien, Ayce Bukulmeyen Ozerdem, Michael DeVaul, David Owens, Denise Rolark-Barne, Donnie L. Shaw, Steve Shulman

## **Exhibit Designer**

Collaborates with Exhibition Creation Partners to design the exhibit displays.

*Service is Everywhere in DC:* Assemble

## **Community Funder**

Provides financial or in-kind resources for the creation and printing of the exhibit.

*Service is Everywhere in DC:* Humanities DC

## Budget

- Project Manager: \$24,000
- Travel: \$500
- Exhibition design and fabrication: \$15,000
- Marketing and advertising: \$2,000
- Evaluation: \$1,000

A project manager was hired to coordinate bringing the groups together in collaborative conversations for exhibition co-creation. This was a part-time position planned for 12 months, and ended up being a vital role in the process, both with coordination of the creation of the exhibition as well as development of the toolkits and resources that founded the Community Museums of Service Program.

Travel expenses were used for local travel, moving the exhibition from location to location.

\$15,000 was allocated to a non-profit museum exhibition design company called Assemble, who spent about a year working with the group to discover the theme, story and create a custom exhibition that fits within the parameters of being accessible, portable, affordable, inclusive and inspiring.

An honorarium was allocated for a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) intern to collate surveys, data and draft a case study of the process.



# Marketing

NMCFCS engaged in 6 rounds of paid promotion on social media for the exhibition, targeted to the Washington, D.C. region.

Results:

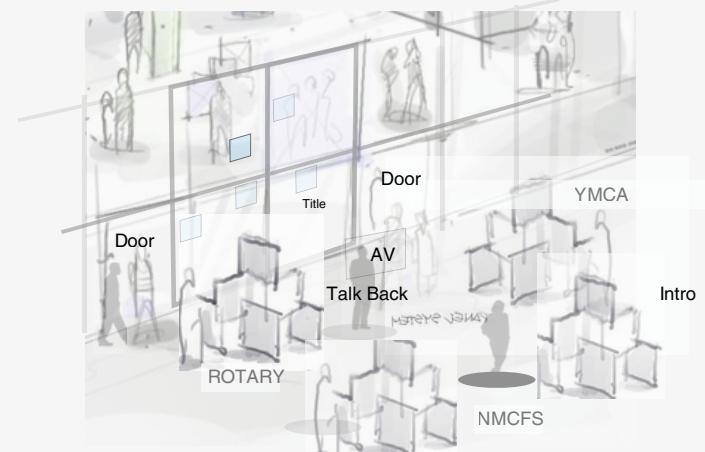
- **Impressions:** 54,552 (# of times ad was displayed)
- **Reach:** 35,347 (# of unique individuals who see the ad)
- **Engagement:** 391 (clicking links, etc.)

NMCFCS funded the design of digital and print flyers, and a press release was distributed to local news stations. The exhibit was promoted on DCPL's website and shared via DCPL, Rotary, YMCA, and NMCFCS mailing lists, with distribution extended through the DC Advisory Council's networks.



# Timeline

- **2022:** NMCFS begins partnership conversations with DCPL, with a goal of creating a community based exhibition to be hosted by the library.
- **2023:** NMCFS forms an advisory council for DC for the community exhibition pilot program.
- **Fall 2023:** NMCFS partners with DCPL, YMCA, and DC Rotary, and a part-time project coordinator is hired.
- **April 2024:** *The Service is Everywhere in DC* exhibit is awarded a grant from Humanities DC
- **October 2024:** NMCFS hosts the first National Service Symposium at the MLK Library, offering a sneak peek of the *Service is Everywhere in DC* exhibit and launching toolkits to guide schools and communities as they create their own service exhibits.
- **November 2024:** The exhibit is showcased at the YMCA Annual Celebration in November, with over 150 guests, including board members and local public figures.
- **January 2025:** The exhibit is launched at Lamond-Riggs Library.
- **April 2025:** *The Service is Everywhere in DC* exhibit hosts a special film screening of *A True American Hero: Reflections on the life of Anthony Bowen*.
- **April 2025:** Volunteers move the exhibition to the MLK Library, where it is displayed for three months.
- **July 2025:** *Service is Everywhere in DC* exhibit is concludes its residency at DCPL.
- **Post residency:** The *Service is Everywhere in DC* exhibit is used by the partners at conferences and events, continuing to tell the story of service in DC.

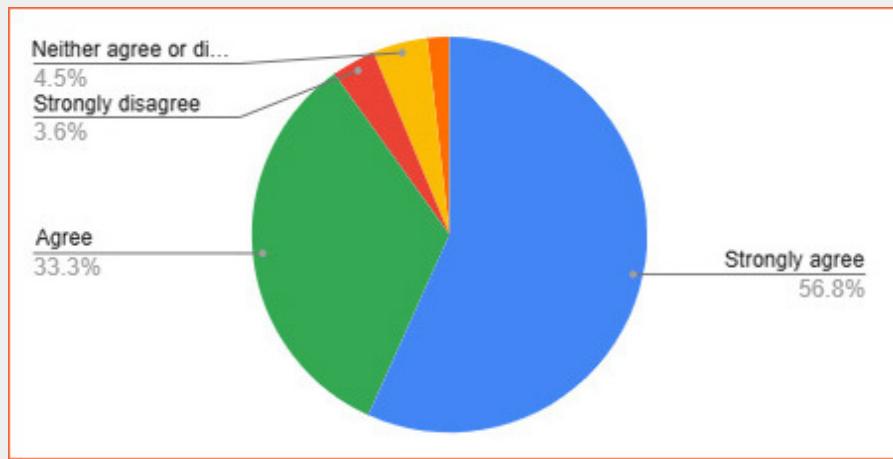


**Service is Everywhere in DC — exhibition sketch**

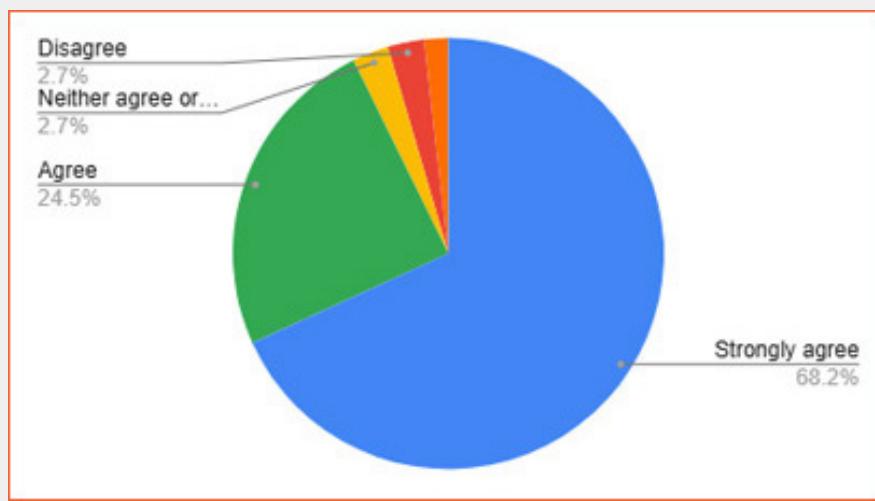
# Impact

From January to July 2025, 98 visitors of the exhibitions took a virtual or physical survey. Respondents were asked to “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree or disagree”, “disagree”, or “strongly disagree” with the following statements:

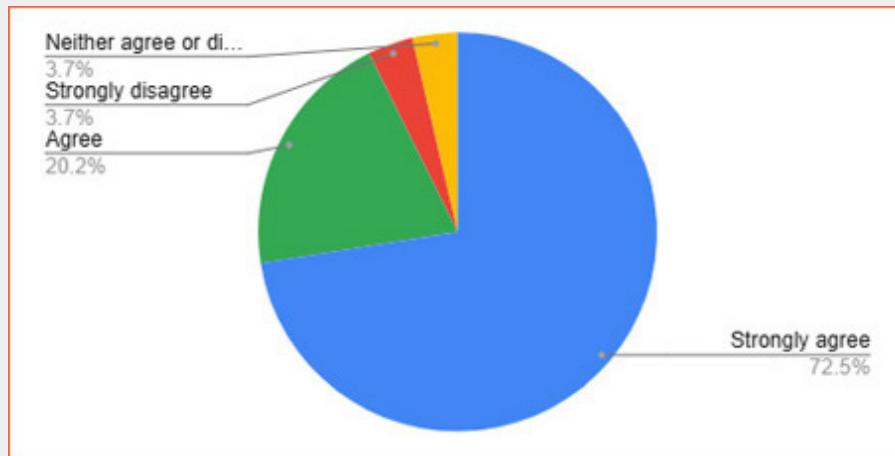
**I learned new information about the work & history of Rotary DC, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington, or the National Museum and Center for Service.**



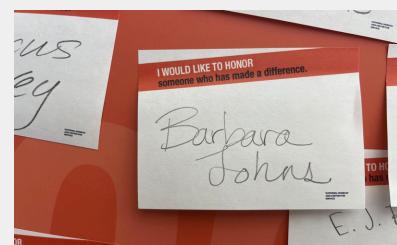
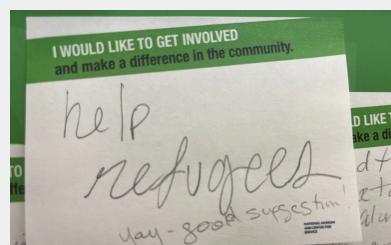
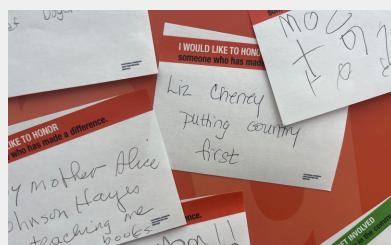
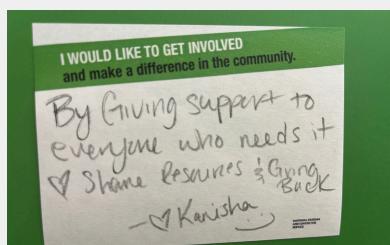
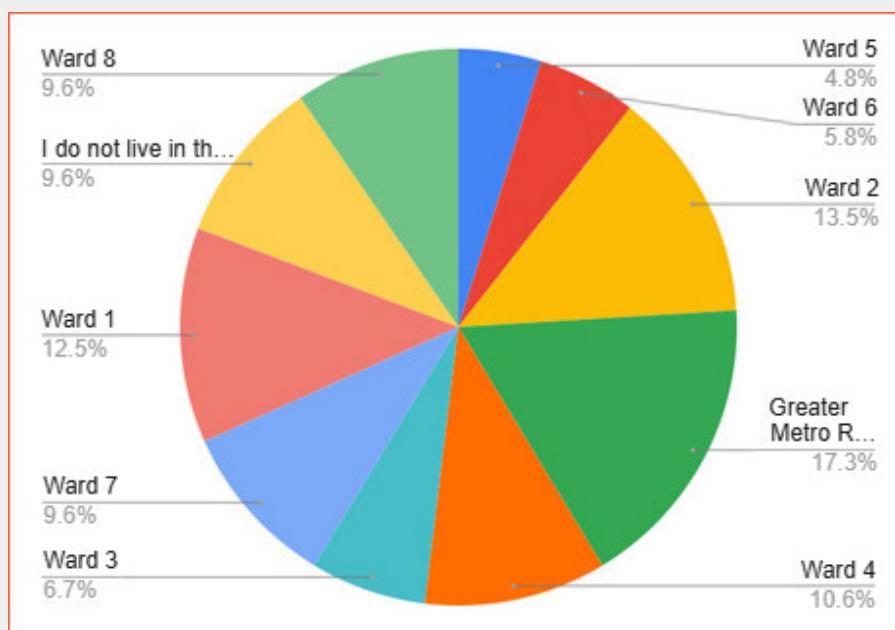
**The service stories in this exhibit are inspirational.**



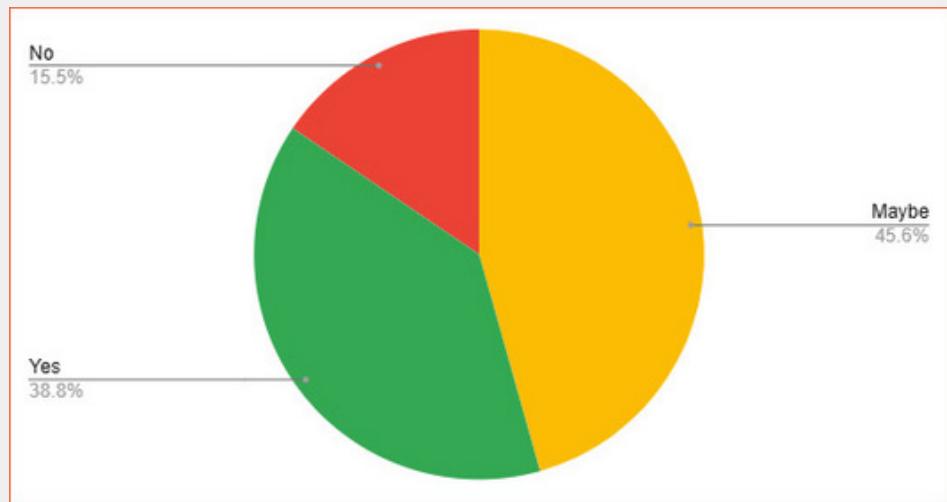
**After viewing the exhibit, I believe that service can bring people together and help strengthen our country.**



## Do you live in one of the following wards in DC?



## Would you be willing to pilot a service exhibition at your institution or organization?



Note that 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "After viewing the exhibit, I believe that service can bring people together and help strengthen our country." Additionally, 84% of those who took the survey said they would be willing or might be willing to pilot a service exhibition at their institution or organization.

## Engagement

Volunteers reported:

- 25.6% of visitors engaged with the exhibition at a *high level*
- 44.2% of visitors engaged at a *moderate level*
- 25.6% of visitors engaged at a *low level*
- 53.8% of visitors responded to the exhibition *positively*
- 46.2% of visitors responded *neutrally*
- 3.8% of visitors responded *negatively*

The exhibit featured interactive display boards that generated engagement.

- 51 written responses to the question, "Whom would you like to honor? Name someone who has given themselves to make the world a better place."
- 45 responses to the question, "How are you getting involved to make a difference in your community?"

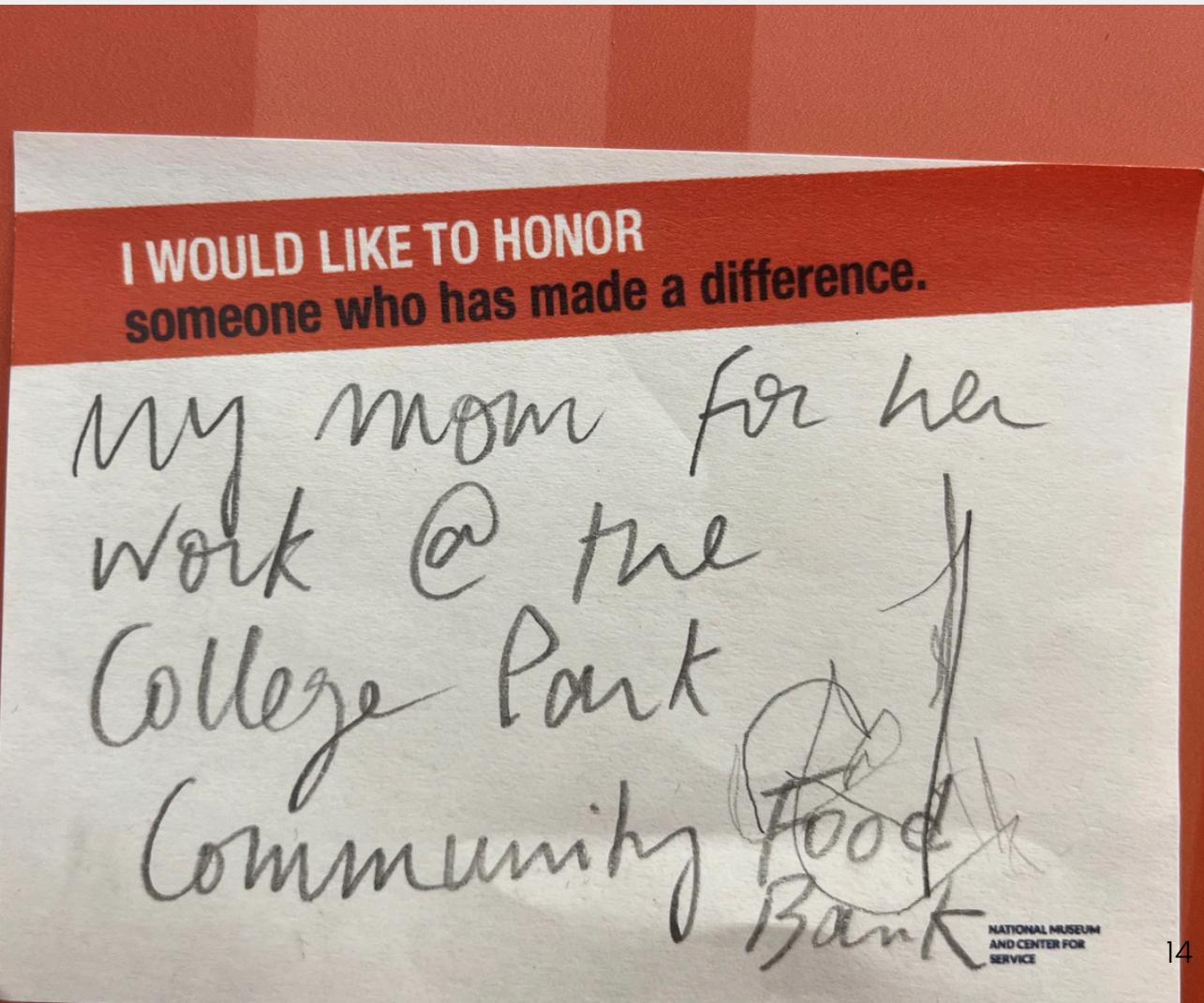
The YMCA and Rotary panel displays proved most popular with visitors, while the interactive talk-back boards drew comparatively less attention. This gap may reflect their physical separation from the main display; when visitors did notice the boards, they tended to engage with them meaningfully.

## What worked well

**Design:** Working with an experienced exhibit designer, Patrick Rogan, increased the level of professionalism for the exhibit and comfort level for all stakeholders.

**Host / Docents:** Hosts played a key role in visitor engagement and answering visitor questions, as well as pointing visitors toward volunteer opportunities.

**Reaching Diverse Audiences:** Because the MLK Library attracts such a diverse audience, the exhibit reached many different groups. One day, volunteers May O'Brien and Annette Weichlein encountered a visitor from Montreal, Canada, and at least five people who took the survey indicated they were from outside the DC area. The impact of the exhibit has a potential for a wider reach by being in a location like the central library.



# Lessons learned

## **Size / Layout:**

At Lamond-Riggs Library, the exhibit was large for the space but fit well at the MLK Library. The panels were positioned near Marianne's Café, a social hub. Survey feedback indicated opportunities to improve clarity: responses suggested the display lacked a clear introduction and identity, and the panels felt non-linear. One viewer noted that "the eye doesn't know where to focus," while another said, "each story was inspirational, but too much to take in." Conversely, some participants found the interlocking panels refreshing and not overwhelming. Going forward, exhibits should balance dynamism with clarity, ensuring a clear entry point, cohesive narrative flow, and accessible design that invites sustained engagement.

**Physical vs virtual engagement:** Viewers did not regularly engage with QR codes, and the online survey yielded few responses. On-site volunteers were effective at collecting responses on paper, and when volunteers engaged visitors, they formed more meaningful connections with the community. People spontaneously engaged with the exhibit when more physical participation opportunities were available.

**Events:** Active storytelling creates a more engaging experience when paired with static displays; however, organizing and conducting events can be a heavy lift for community partners. Having a clear plan for events and leadership roles early on is key to successful implementation.

**Missed opportunity:** Vibrant libraries, such as the DCPL, offer multiple opportunities for visitors to volunteer in supporting their local library branch community. Largely focused on YMCA and DC Rotary, the *Service is Everywhere in DC* initiative missed the opportunity to feature and/or energize local library volunteer activities outside of these two organizations.

**Designing for public places:** When planning exhibits for public spaces, it is important to be mindful of the physical components. At the MLK Library, video content was displayed on a monitor, but the thumb drive containing the content was stolen twice. Future design processes should continue to prioritize location, audience, and secure, reliable delivery of digital assets.

# A special thank you to our exhibition partners



DC Public Library



HumanitiesDC



## About us

The National Museum and Center for Service will be the first of its kind – a signature building in our nation’s capital to honor and inspire the American spirit of service in all its forms, and a truly national initiative to create and sustain exhibitions of service in nearly every school and community across the country. The result will be millions of people every day of the year encountering uplifting stories and examples of service and discovering how they too can participate. When more people learn about and are inspired to serve, every service and charitable organization stands to benefit and the democracy itself will be strengthened as people feel more connected to one another and to their communities.

### Get in touch

[www.nmcfs.org](http://www.nmcfs.org)

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