

Leveraging Investments in Creativity AND METLIFE FOUNDATION RECOGNIZE OPEN BOOK WITH THE 2009 METLIFE INNOVATIVE SPACE AWARDS

\$10,000 award to Minneapolis, Minn. literary arts center

New York, NY - **Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC)** and **MetLife Foundation** announced the six winners of the nationwide, competitive 2009 MetLife Innovative Space Awards. **Open Book in Minneapolis, Minn.** received a \$10,000 award in recognition of the exemplary collaboration among its founders, three independent non-profit organizations – The Loft Literary Center, Milkweed Editions, and Minnesota Center for Book Arts – who pooled their resources to form a vibrant literary arts center. The awards recognize outstanding efforts in the design and development of affordable space for artists, which is an integral part of LINC's *Space for Change: Building Communities Through Innovative Art Spaces* program. These spaces provide a stable foundation from which artists may pursue their works and shape the neighborhoods they inhabit. The winners were selected from more than 90 organizations in 29 states.

Opened in 2000, Open Book is a center for those interested in the literary and book arts, a catalyst for artistic collaboration, bringing together the many partners who create books, from idea to finished work. Consisting of three founding tenants – Milkweed Editions, Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and the Loft Literary Center – Open Book is recognized for its unique model that facilitates interaction between writers, editors, and publishers under one roof. The 55,000 square foot facility is located in downtown Minneapolis and provides work, education, and performance space to more than 1,400 artists annually. Within its walls, it offers a broad public place for contemplation, conversation, and artistic creation. Previously a vacated industrial area, Open Book is a pioneer in the now vibrant river front arts corridor. Acknowledged for its adaptive re-use and community impact, Open Book now seeks to create an even more dynamic, collaborative, and sustainable artist space for the future.

"We are pleased to recognize Open Book for its extraordinary work to create innovative, affordable, and sustainable artist space that positively impacts its community," said Dennis White, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. "Open Book and the other winning programs serve as models for communities interested in creating and benefiting from sustainable art spaces."

"Open Book exemplifies how the development of affordable living and working spaces for artists can play a powerful role not only in the lives and careers of those artists, but in the communities where these spaces are located. It is an outstanding example of excellent programming, socially progressive real estate development, and the ability to provide creative and economic sustenance in a community," said Judilee Reed, executive director, LINC.

Four other winning organizations each received a \$10,000 award:

- **The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning in Lexington, KY** was recognized for its robust programming for professional writers and commitment to fostering improved literacy levels in its local community, recognizing the impact that art can have on basic life skills.
- **The City of Asylum/Pittsburgh, Pa.** provides outstanding levels of service to artists in exile through a residency program with a full range of support services for the personal and professional recovery of artists and their families.
- **Soo Theatre and STARS in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.** jumpstarted the economic and cultural revitalization of its area by bringing arts education and programming to the region. Soo Theatre is now a cultural asset that allows the local hospital and university to attract and retain talent.
- **Watts House Project in Los Angeles, Calif.** meshes artists' skills with local needs to improve households, creating a bond between artist and neighbor by integrating sustainable building and landscaping into everyday life.

The grand prize winning organization, **The International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA)**, received \$50,000 in recognition of its development of the **Curley School**, an exceptional, community-engaged artist space anchoring an arts-based revitalization movement in the border town of Ajo, Ariz. and neighboring Tohono O'odham Nation and Sonora, Mexico.

"Artist spaces should be fundamental to well-planned communities. We hope a broader set of stakeholders, including policymakers, planners and other civic leaders, will embrace arts and culture as significant components of effective development strategies," said Susan Silberberg-Robinson, associate project director, MetLife Innovative Space Awards and lecturer in Urban Design and Planning, MIT.

Space for Change: Building Communities Through Innovative Art Spaces was launched in 2009 by LINC in partnership with MIT's Department of Urban Studies, through a funding collaboration between the MetLife Foundation and Ford Foundation. To learn more, visit www.lincnet.net/artist-space.

About LINC

Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) is a 10-year initiative to improve artists' ability to make work, build social capital and contribute to democratic values. For more information, visit www.lincnet.net.

About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants are made to support health, educational, civic and cultural organizations and programs. The Foundation contributes to arts and cultural organizations, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broad audiences through inclusive programming, and making arts more accessible for all people. For more information, please visit www.metlife.org.

Contact: Judilee Reed, 646-731-3275, judilee@lincnet.net, LINC
David Hammarstrom, 401-827-2273, dhammarstrom@metlife.com