Library Foundation announces Barbara & Al Siemer as recipients of Julian Sinclair Smith Award

COLUMBUS—Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) has announced Barbara and Al Siemer as the 2016 recipients of the Julian Sinclair Smith Award. Each year, the Columbus Metropolitan Library Foundation (CMLF) presents the award to honor inspiring individuals living or working in and around Franklin County with a passion for lifelong learning. The award will be presented at CMLF’s annual Celebration of Learning fundraiser gala on Friday, Nov. 4 at Main Library.

Cleveland native Al Siemer started Desco Corporation in 1966 and the company grew from acquisitions. The manufacturing holding company now employs 1,500 associates. Al is still actively involved with Desco.

The Siemers adopted Columbus as their home in 1983 and, with Desco’s continued success, they sought ways to give back to their community, first by joining United Way’s Tocqueville Society. In addition to serving 16 years on the CMLF Board, Barbara Siemer has also served on the board of The New Albany Community Foundation. Today, she continues to serve on the boards of the Columbus Museum of Art, I Know I Can and The Columbus Foundation’s Governing Committee.

In 2003, following a study on the negative effects of student mobility in Columbus City Schools, Barbara, a former high school English teacher, began an experiment in Sarasota, Florida dedicated to keeping children in their schools by stabilizing families in imminent danger of eviction. By 2011, the

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Siemer Institute for Family Stability was created and the initiative began spreading across the country. Their program now operates in 53 of the largest cities in the United States. In 2015, the Institute served over 30,000 families.

The Siemers have two children, Elizabeth and David, and three grandchildren with another on the way.

Julian Sinclair Smith was founder of the Sinclair Broadcast Group, owner of WSYX/ABC 6 and operator of WTTE/Fox 28. His rise to prominence in the industry can be attributed to his quest for knowledge, beginning with the completion of a radio correspondence course while still in high school. When he died in 1993, the Smith family chose to honor his passion toward reading, education and lifelong learning, with an award named in his honor presented through the CMLF.

The 2016 Celebration of Learning program promises a spirited exchange between two men at the intersection of politics, media and the law. This year’s featured speaker is bestselling author and CNN senior analyst Jeffrey Toobin. He will be interviewed by Michael Krasny, host of the award-winning KQED “FORUM,” a program discussing news and public affairs, current events, culture, health, business and technology.

Arrangements for the appearance of Jeffrey Toobin made through Greater Talent Network, Inc., New York, NY.

Celebration of Learning, the CMLF’s annual fundraiser, will be held in the atrium, stacks and new Reading Room in the newly transformed Main Library, which opened June 25 after a 16-month renovation.

The event features a renowned author and the presentation of The Julian Sinclair Smith Award for Lifelong Learning. The CMLF helps fund the library’s capital needs as well as Homework Help Centers, Ready for Kindergarten initiatives, employment resources and Summer Reading Club, supporting the needs of kids, teens and adults.

The honorary chairs of this year’s Celebration of Learning are Donna and Nick Akins. Visit foundation.columbuslibrary.org for more information.

NOTE: Digital photo available upon request.

Columbus Metropolitan Library has served the people of Franklin County, Ohio since 1873. With its Main Library and 22 branches, CML is well known for signature services and programs like Homework Help Centers, Reading Buddies, Summer Reading Club and Ready for Kindergarten. The library’s Strategic Plan supports the vision of “a thriving community where wisdom prevails,” which positions CML to respond to areas of urgent need: kids unprepared for kindergarten, third grade reading proficiency, high school graduation, college readiness and employment resources.

CML was named a 2011 National Medal Winner by the Institute for Museum and Library Services for work in community service, the highest honor for libraries and museums. Columbus Metropolitan Library has been rated a 5-Star Library by Library Journal for seven of the eight years the magazine has published its industry ratings.