

Press Release

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WILL SHORTZ, DEBORAH TANNEN, JASON REYNOLDS ALL HONORED BY PLANET WORD FOR WORK IN WORDS, LANGUAGE AND READING

(Washington, D.C.) On Oct. 11 in a private ceremony held at Planet Word, three luminaries in the fields of words, language and reading were honored for their contributions to literacy. Will Shortz, Deborah Tannen, and Jason Reynolds were the museum's first Word, Language and Reading honorees.

At the event, the museum's CEO and founder, Ann Friedman, remarked, "I'm overjoyed to bestow Planet Word's first awards on our three honorees. These early supporters were instrumental in realizing Planet Word's vision and they embody the museum's core values. They took a chance on me and on this idea, and Planet Word wouldn't be what it is today without them. I am truly grateful for their generosity, collaboration, and support."

Will Shortz is the crossword editor for The New York Times and was the museum's inaugural Word honoree. He sold his first puzzle at the age of 14 before joining the New York Times and becoming the puzzle master for NPR's *Weekend Edition Sunday*. He is on the Planet Word Advisory Board and contributed to the development of the museum's word puzzle experience, Lexicon Lane. He was recognized by Planet Word for his passion for words and his embodiment of the fun in language and word play.

Deborah Tannen is an author and professor of linguistics at Georgetown University and the museum's first language honoree. Professor Tannen's life's work is the study of human communication. She has taken the academic study of sociolinguistics and made it accessible and relevant to people's everyday lives. Her books have helped people understand how they communicate in their families, workplaces, and relationships, and how to do so more effectively, and understand each other at a deeper level. She was recognized by Planet Word for her engaging practical application of language science.

Jason Reynolds is an author and the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature and the museum's first Reading honoree. Beginning as a reluctant reader himself, Reynolds became so enamored with reading he made a career out of writing books to inspire that same love for reading in others. His books have been New York Times bestsellers and have won numerous awards. He spoke at the museum's groundbreaking in 2018, contributed his voice on the Story Table in the museum's magical Schwarzman Family Library and narrated a quarter of the poems in the museum's secret poetry nook. He was recognized by the museum for creating worlds that inspire young people to see themselves as readers and see the positivity and possibility in books.

The event raised over half a million dollars to support the free museum's mission to renew and inspire a love of words, language, and reading. Bank of America was the premiere sponsor. For more info about Planet Word visit: planetwordmuseum.org.

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