CITY OF OCEANSIDE
NEWS RELEASE

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"THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD" SELECTED FOR COMMUNITY-WIDE READING PROGRAM IN OCEANSIDE

The Oceanside Public Library is proud to host the second Big Read program in Oceanside. The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. From February 1-29, 2012, the Library will host an exciting array of special programs related to *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. A sample of the special events inspired by the book include:

- February 2 - Kick-off event featuring live music of the Harlem Renaissance provided by radio station KSDS Jazz 88.3 with performances from the Black Storytellers of San Diego at the Sunshine Brooks Theatre beginning at 5:30 p.m. Free copies of the book will be given away at the event.
- February 4 - Art Reception at the Oceanside Museum of Art featuring African American quilts from the collection of Dr. Maude Southwell Wahlman.
- February 9 - A live theatrical performance of *Zora* by the American Place Theatre Company at El Camino High School's Truax Theatre.
- February 18 - Special speaking engagement by Lucy Hurston, niece of Zora Neale Hurston and author of *Speak, So You Can Speak Again*.
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Other special events include a living history presentation, African American genealogy research, a Southern "Hat Stroll", a sculpture exhibition, book discussions, films and more. All programs are free and open to the public.

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The accompanying program for children, called The Little Read, will feature programs and storytimes around the book *Zora Hurston and the Chinaberry Tree* by William Miller.

Zora Neale Hurston was one of the greatest contributors to African American literature. Hurston (1891-1960) was a folklorist, anthropologist and author during the Harlem Renaissance, and her fictional and factual accounts of black heritage remain unparalleled. Of Hurston's four novels and more than 50 published short stories, plays and essays, she is best known for her 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which presents Janie Mae Crawford's growth from a voiceless teenage girl into a woman who takes charge of her own destiny.

The NEA presents The Big Read in cooperation with Arts Midwest. The Big Read in Oceanside is funded through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, with contributions from the Friends of the Oceanside Public Library and the Oceanside Public Library Foundation, with generous support from many community partners.

For more information on the Big Read in Oceanside or other Library programs, please visit the Library's website at www.oceansidepubliclibrary.org or call 760-435-5600.

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