



CONTACT:
Donna Haghightat
Chief Development Officer
860-695-6296
dhaghightat@hplct.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Local Author Explores Hartford Hospital Fire of 1961

Hartford, Connecticut (July 6, 2015) — Hartford Public Library will host Pulitzer Prize-nominated author F. Mark Granato for a presentation on his historical fiction novel, “Out of Reach: The Day Hartford Hospital Burned,” on July 16 at 6:00 p.m. at the downtown library, 500 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103.

Granato’s acclaimed novel is based on testimony of veterans who fought the December 1961 blaze, a three-alarm flash fire that gutted the Hospital’s ninth-floor and claimed 16 victims including patients, a resident doctor, nurses, staff and visitors. A carelessly discarded cigarette is believed to have been the source of the fire, however, this has never proven. Ladders that couldn’t reach the fire floor, the absence of breathing apparatus in heavy smoke and lack of communications equipment severely hampered efforts. Through unthinkable acts of bravery and determination, the Hartford Fire Department contained the blaze to only one floor, saving countless lives.

Granato’s presentation is the first of two programs in the Library’s “Hartford Heroes” series this summer that acknowledges the history and accomplishments of the Hartford Fire Department. “The Library is delighted to tell the illustrious history of Hartford’s heroic firefighters and to honor those who serve today,” said the Library’s CEO Matt Poland.

On July 21, former Hartford Fire Chief John B. Stewart, Jr. will present his book, *Hard Climb Up The Ladder: The Story of the First Black Fire Chief of a Major New England City*. Chief Stewart joined the Hartford Fire Department in 1952 and went on to help found the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters. After a distinguished career with the HFD, Stewart worked for years in public service as a city councilor to help “make life better for Hartford’s poor and people of color”.

Stan Simpson, Hartford Courant columnist and host of “The Stan Simpson Show” (FOX CT) will lead the conversation with Chief Stewart on July 21. Books will be available for purchase at 5:00 p.m. and the discussion will begin at 6:00pm.

Granato, who grew up in Hartford's south end, worked as a journalist before joining United Technologies as a communications executive. He is the author of six novels including the acclaimed Vietnam-era novel, *Finding David*, which was nominated for a 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction. His other novels include *Of Winds and Rage*, an historical fiction account of the Great New England Hurricane of 1938, *Beneath His Wings: The Plot to Murder Lindbergh*, *Titanic: The Final Voyage*, *The Barn Find*, and most recently, *Out of Reach: The Day Hartford Hospital Burned*. He resides in Wethersfield.

ABOUT [HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY](#)

As a finalist for the 2013 and 2014 National Medal from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Hartford Public Library has been recognized as a national leader in redefining the urban public library in the 21st century as an innovative and stimulating place where people can learn and discover, explore their passions, and find a rich array of resources that contribute to a full life. Hartford Public Library provides free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Serving the residents of Hartford and beyond at its nine branches and Downtown location, Hartford Public Library receives more than 833,000 visits per year from adults, children and families seeking early literacy opportunities, work skills training, civic engagement, arts enrichment, and so much more. Visit hplct.org.

###