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## ***Celebrate 5 years of AskUsNow!***

### ***Questions answered online 24/7!***

**BALTIMORE** (March 19, 2008) – The Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Library Development and Services joins with Maryland libraries to celebrate the fifth anniversary of *Maryland AskUsNow!* This celebration will take place at 10:30 a.m. at the West County Branch of the Anne Arundel County Public Library. Dr. Grasmick will join officials from around the state to applaud this free online service that provides answers to questions, research guidance and help navigating the Internet 24/7. With over 230,000 questions answered, *AskUsNow!* provides trusted information using the resources of trained librarians. *AskUsNow!* is accessed through the website [www.askusnow.info](http://www.askusnow.info), or by selecting the bright yellow *AskUsNow!* icon on partner library web sites.

*AskUsNow!* has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education’s Virtual Reference Desk Project as an outstanding online information service. Joseph Thompson, the coordinator of *AskUsNow!*, has spoken about the service at numerous conferences, including those organized by the U.S. Department of State that have included participants from Malta and Poland. Maryland is one of the first states to implement this type of 24 hour online answer service. Continual feedback and monitoring of the program assure quality.

“I am thrilled that this online service is being used at such a high rate by Maryland’s middle and high school students working on their homework,” said State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy S. Grasmick. “It is impressive that we can click on computers from home to access librarians for help with research or find answers to thousands of questions.”

This project is funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds, through the Maryland State Department of Education’s Division of Library Development & Services. The services are provided by partner libraries.

“I am proud of the service that *AskUsNow!* provides the residents of Maryland,” said Irene Padilla, Assistant State Superintendent for Libraries. “In this computer age, *AskUsNow!* offers students and business people a way to access information even when the library is closed.”

For more information visit the Maryland AskUsNow! website at [www.askusnow.info](http://www.askusnow.info)