
2020 NEW JERSEY
**STATE
LIBRARY
AWARDS**



Connecting people with information through libraries

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2020 NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY AWARDS

LIBRARIES AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITIES



New Jersey public libraries lead the way in promoting the essential role that library programming plays in building community engagement and individual empowerment. As community anchor institutions, libraries are uniquely positioned to address the various needs of the communities they serve; however, they are often challenged with stretching their resources and reaching beyond existing partnerships.

The New Jersey State Library awards were developed to recognize hard-working public libraries and their staffs that lay the groundwork for successful community coalition-building and carefully targeted programming. The winning programs exemplify the essential role that library programming plays in the lives of residents across the state.

We applaud these award-winning libraries on their exceptional programs that highlight some of the best early literacy and multicultural programming currently being offered around the state. All of these programs prove that it is not the size or budget of the library that counts but the desire to encourage lifelong learning as they fulfill roles as community centers of cultural and civic engagement.

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CATEGORIES



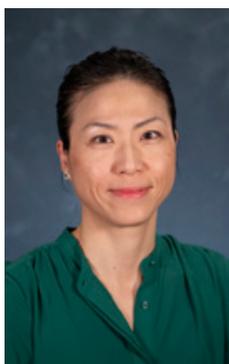
Early Literacy

SHARON RAWLINS

Youth Services Specialist, Lifelong Learning, srawlins@njstatelib.org

The *Best Practices in Early Literacy Award* honors outstanding public libraries that currently provide exemplary literacy programs for children from birth to six years, their families and caregivers.

The award provides a \$1,000 honorarium, a certificate and promotion of the winning library as a model program for other libraries.



Multicultural Programming

MIMI LEE

Diversity & Literacy Consultant, Lifelong Learning, mlee@njstatelib.org

The *Multicultural Program Award* recognizes library programs that increase understanding and promote diversity and multiculturalism in New Jersey's libraries. Libraries are encouraged to develop long-term partnerships with community organizations that result in sustainable cultural programming.

The award provides a \$1,000 honorarium, a certificate and promotion of the winning library as a model program for other libraries.



Innovative Partnerships

PEGGY CADIGAN

Deputy State Librarian, Innovation & Strategic Partnerships, pcadigan@njstatelib.org

As the State Library continues its focus on innovation and collaboration, the *Innovative Partnership Award* seeks exemplary models and technologies that can help assist the New Jersey library community in remaining relevant and essential community anchors.

This award recognizes libraries that work to build strong partnerships with fellow government agencies, local organizations and businesses in an effort to develop library programs that support key areas of continuing need, such as small business outreach, workforce development, digital literacy and much more.

Winning Library: Camden County Library System

2020 NEW JERSEY

STATE LIBRARY

AWARD FOR

BEST PRACTICES

IN EARLY LITERACY

STORY TIME IN THE PARK

The Camden County Library System's eight branches serve 26 diverse communities. When looking for new ways to engage families, remove service barriers and work cooperatively with other County departments, the library looked to the Camden County Park System's 21 parks and conservation areas. These parks have become the showcase for a very popular outdoor pop up programming series for children and families. Starting in September 2018 as a weekly pilot series of four outdoor story times, it expanded to eight weeks, then was presented in the spring, summer and fall of 2019 with 25 to 35 attendees at every event.

Pop-up story times include stories, songs, stretches and activities with parachutes, scarves and shakers. The staff brings a portable collection of children's books that can be checked out thanks to an on-hand hotspot and laptop.

New library users can get library cards as well. Most pop-up events occur during the day, but the library has experimented with evening story times at well-lit venues, and they have been popular with working families. Local police officers and fire fighters sometimes attend and give children a peek at their cars and trucks, and even occasionally read to the group.



“We love Pop Up Story Times offered by the Camden County Library System. It allows the library mobility to bring what it has to offer to those, who for whatever reason, may not be able to get to their local library. Most importantly, it gives parents some sanity in having free activities to do with their children.” –Becky Nieves, story time mom

The pop-up story times have removed a barrier to service for children in communities that may not otherwise attend traditional library programming. The partnerships that the library has developed with the County Parks Department and local officials have strengthened relationships and increased awareness and appreciation for library services.

Winning Library: Hickory Corner Branch of the Mercer County Library System

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STATE LIBRARY

AWARD FOR

BEST PRACTICES

IN EARLY LITERACY

LITTLE LEARNERS PRESCHOOL STEAM PROGRAM



Youth Services Librarian Christine Holcombe created *Little Learners*

because, although the STEM/STEAM movement was popular, she felt literacy was being pushed out. The K-2 schools in her area eliminated their traditional library program and let their librarians go in favor of starting a STEAM program.

So, she created Little Learners, a weekly STEAM program for children ages 3 -5 that runs all year long, focusing on a different topic each week. The program begins with Ms. Holcombe reading a book pertaining to the topic, and as she reads, she pauses to conduct experiments and demonstrations inspired by details in the book. Afterward, the children and their caregivers participate in a variety of hands-on activities that

“Thank you for making learning so cool. You are the most fun teacher ever. I love Tuesdays because I have your class then. I love all the experiments and crafts you come up with.” –Cali, young homeschooler

reinforce the concepts Ms. Holcombe read about. She’s presented programs on dental health, the science of Seuss, and the march of the penguins, among many others.

Ms. Holcombe says, “I love hearing how my program sparked an interest in a child! Oftentimes, children will ask me a question that leads to our next Little Learners topic because I always say, ‘What a great question. We should investigate that!’” The impact of Little Learners has been huge. It became so popular that other branches began offering similar programs. Word of mouth was really all it took to bring people in. Ms. Holcombe loves it when children and parents say how much they enjoy her programs because it means so much to her that she’s inspiring kids to read and construct their own knowledge.

Winning Library: Stratford Public Library

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AWARD FOR

BEST PRACTICES

IN EARLY LITERACY

GRANDPARENT'S AND SPECIAL FRIENDS VALENTINE'S DAY

The Stratford Public Library created the Grandparent's and Special Friends Valentine's Day Party because they are a tiny, independent library with a very large senior citizen population. In the past, they've had limited success in getting preschool age children into the library for programming. This program was designed to appeal to their regular patrons and get them to invite their grandchildren or neighbors with small children, so the library staff could get them into the library and then advertise the library's preschool programming.

Library staff set up a Valentine's Day photo booth to take Polaroid pictures and also made magnetic photo frames to put the Polaroids in as a keepsake for attendees. They provided snacks and read stories about grandparents, families, and love. This was also an opportunity for children and their grandparents and special friends to explore the library's toys and resources. Around 22 children and 20 adults participated in the program.

“Making the event a bonding time, rather than a stressful time for grandparents to chase kids or glue or cut or color is key.”

– Sara Figueroa, Assistant Director



Assistant Director Figueroa said a library that already has a successful preschool program could adapt this program by having preschoolers reach out to seniors in their lives, as opposed to, in the library's case, the seniors reaching out to younger children.

Before this program, Ms. Figueroa said the library averaged about 6-10 preschoolers. Now, their average is around 17-22 preschoolers on a weekly basis. "In our very small service area, this is a huge increase," she said. "This one program didn't bring all of the new families in, but it definitely contributed to it."

Winning Library: Montclair Public Library

2020 NEW JERSEY

STATE LIBRARY

AWARD FOR

MULTICULTURAL

PROGRAMMING

A CELEBRATION OF PERUVIAN CULTURE ON THE PLAZA

We chose Peruvian culture because northern New Jersey has the largest population of Peruvian residents on the east coast of the US, many of them located in nearby towns to Montclair, including: Paterson, Newark, and Bloomfield. Our goal was to offer a program that would broaden Montclair residents' understanding of Peruvian culture, while at the same time inviting Peruvians from local communities to share and join in the festivities. We partnered with several local businesses and residents to create this afternoon and evening program, and we found great success.

For the year, the library experienced the largest influx of patrons for a single library program. We had a diverse group of about 500 people of all ages, ethnicities and genders attend and participate. Every library department participated in this event: Circulation (chose and displayed books and directed students), Youth Services (Storytime), Adult Services (Creativity Caravan), Adult School (created overall programming and ran the event).

It was truly a "community event" with local businesses, artists and town management participating.



Traditional Peruvian costumes in the main lobby (above) and all ages dancing at Montclair Public Library.



Winning Library: Northfield Public Library

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AWARD FOR

MULTICULTURAL

PROGRAMMING

AROUND THE WORLD AT THE LIBRARY

Our event *Around the World at the Library* featured all seven continents. Countries that local families represented included Bulgaria, Italy, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Peru, Republic of Congo, Japan, Greece, India, Haiti, China, and the Netherlands. We attempted to have at least one family contribute to each continent to demonstrate how our small community represents our larger world. It was titled after the Disney World attraction at Epcot in which guests can walk through various countries and experience small glimpses of what those countries are like. Much like the theme park attraction, our library was set up in a similar manner.

The tables in the library were lined up around the outer walls of the room which allowed patrons to “travel” to different countries. Lanterns and tablecloths that featured flags from various countries decorated the area. Each table featured a large, uniquely colored poster board which listed facts about that continent, color coordinated table cloth, cultural appetizers from specific countries on that continent, and personal items or pictures from families in cultural dress or visiting continental monuments. This multicultural community event program was a huge success due to the support shown by our patrons and friends.



The support of patrons, families, and local businesses made this event successful. The generosity of all involved fed and entertained over one hundred and twenty attendees including our mayor. With community help, creativity, and cultural awareness, other libraries can host “Around the World at the Library” in their town as well!

Winning Library: South Plainfield Public Library

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STATE LIBRARY

AWARD FOR

MULTICULTURAL

PROGRAMMING

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

At the South Plainfield Public Library, we strive to be as diverse and inclusive as possible with the resources and programming we offer the community. Our *Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration* is just one of many events we present that fulfills our mission of collaboration, dialogue, and cultural inclusion throughout our town, and beyond. The program is a three-hour celebration that consists of dance and musical performances, readings, crafts, displays and food that reflects an expansive range of cultures throughout Latin America.

Among last year's highlights: Ecuadorian-Mexican group, Tonantzin, performed the Danza Cañari, a traditional

Ecuadorian dance. High School students recited poetry by Chilean writer Pablo Neruda. Fifth graders led the crowd with a Spanish tongue-twister, "Compadre Cómprame un Coco." Mexican restaurant, Casa Romero, provided flautas and fajitas, while Costa Rican eatery, Antojos Ticos, served arroz con pollo. The program took the library to the next level in that people of all ages and backgrounds gathered in one space to appreciate and celebrate the beauty of Latinx culture.

It provided a positive social and cultural space and helped acknowledge the undeniable impact of an often-underrepresented segment of the population in both a local and global sense.



Winning Library: Long Branch Free Public Library

2020 NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY AWARD FOR

INNOVATION

The Long Branch Free Public Library is awarded the 2020 NJSL Innovation Award for its continued commitment to building strong partnerships with government agencies, local organizations and the businesses community.

Grow with Google

On December 4, 2019, the *Grow with Google* tour made a stop in New Jersey as part of an ongoing initiative to provide free training, tools, and resources for public libraries in all 50 states. Job seekers, small business owners, library staffs, librarians and nonprofit leaders gathered at the Long Branch Free Public Library for digital skills workshops and one-on-one coaching. Instructors shared with attendees how to leverage Google products and services to enhance their work. Visiting Google presenters and coaches joined Long Branch Mayor John Pallone and New Jersey-local YouTube creator Laura Vitale at the Long Branch event.



Long Branch Free Public Library director and staff during *Grow with Google* event.

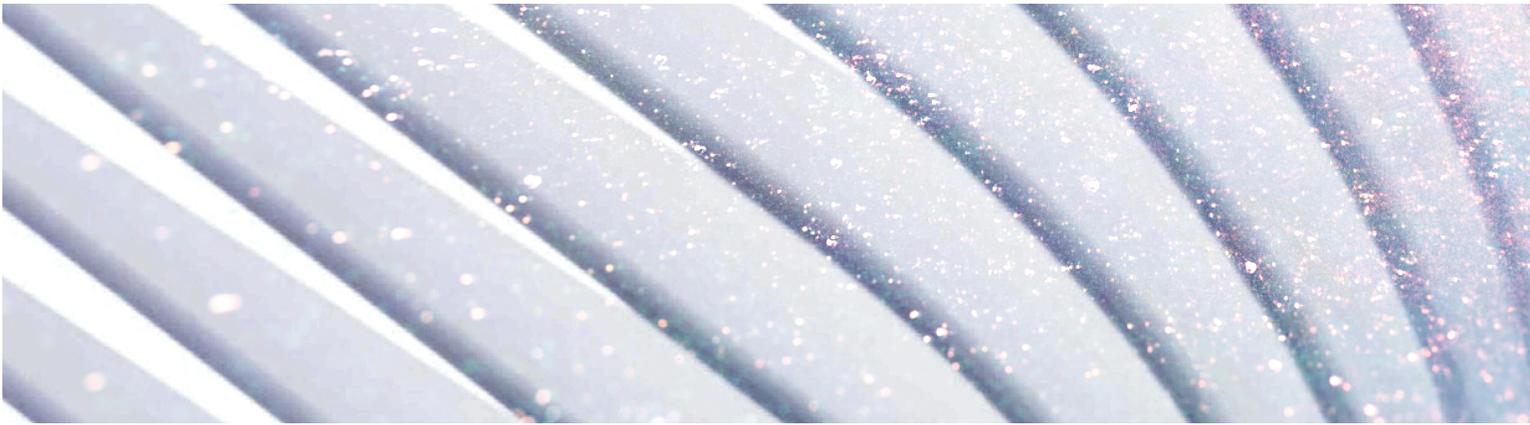
Fresh Start @ Your Library

In 2009, the Long Branch Free Public Library created *Fresh Start* as a service to meet the needs of its community and to break the cycles of recidivism. Library Director Tonya Garcia conceived the idea of providing library support services for citizens returning from prison to local communities.

Based on the success of this innovative community program, in June 2019, the Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded the New Jersey State Library with a National Leadership Grant, totaling \$628,774. The New Jersey State Library, in partnership with the New Jersey State Parole Board and the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development, adopted the reentry program, and expanded it to include six participating libraries in New Jersey.



Peggy Cadigan, Deputy State Librarian for Innovation & Strategic Partnerships and *Fresh Start @ Your Library* Program Director, with Tonya Garcia, Long Branch Free Public Library Director and Founder of *Fresh Start* program.



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