

THE NEW JERSEY

STATE LIBRARY AWARDS

BEST
PRACTICES

MULTICULTURAL
PROGRAMS



2018

Connecting people with information through libraries

NJ State Library
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SCOTCH PLAINS LIBRARY FOR: [OUTDOOR FUN](#)

LIBRARIES AT THE HEART OF OUR 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 situated to address the various needs of the communities they serve, however they are often challenged with stretching their resources and reaching beyond existing partnerships.

I am delighted to recognize the winners of our Best Practices in Early Literacy and Multicultural Program awards. These awards were developed to recognize those hard-working public libraries and their staffs in laying out the groundwork for successful community coalition-building and carefully targeted programming. The winning programs all exemplify the essential role that library programming plays in the lives of residents across the state.

As State Librarian of New Jersey, I 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 show 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.

Please join me in congratulating our winning libraries.



Mary L. Chute

MARY L. CHUTE

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EARLY LITERACY

The *Best Practices in Early Literacy Award* honors up to four 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.



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MULTICULTURAL PROGRAMMING

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 ultimate goal of the program is to share the libraries' programs as models for inspiration and adaptation by other libraries.

BEST PRACTICES IN EARLY LITERACY

WINNING LIBRARIES

SCOTCH PLAINS LIBRARY FOR:

OUTDOOR FUN

In 2016, the library began a program series called **Outdoor Fun** for children. It was so popular that caregivers requested it in 2017 and again this summer. Outdoor Fun is designed for children as a way to explore literacy, STEAM and outdoor play all in one. It is held for eight weeks and allows 20 children with their caregivers to attend. Outdoor Fun begins inside each week, where the staff read a story and describe the related activity. In 2017, ice painting, flower planting, sand art, gravity painting, bubbles, water play, squeeze bottle art and sidewalk chalk were done.

By choosing books that emphasize the open possibilities of art, such as *Art* by Patrick McDonnell or *Chalk* by Bill Thomson, staff stress to parents that this is more about the process than the outcome. Children like that they can be creative without a set expectation of the result. “This idea of process art is, unfortunately, being done less and less which made Outdoor Fun stand out and become the success it is,” said Amy Donnadio, library associate. As with any project done for the first time, some activities were more successful for this group setting than others. The ice paint recipe was not as user friendly as the staff had hoped. Yet even with a few missteps, Outdoor Fun helped expand the library’s programming for families to include more art and, of course, the wonderful outdoors.



“Both my two and four year old loved the variety of activities. It was great to do something we don't normally do at home!”

—CARLA JONES, PARENT



SOUTH PLAINFIELD LIBRARY FOR: STORYTIMES

The South Plainfield Free Public Library believes that in order to sustain the library for the future it needs to provide programs that instill the love of reading at an early age. In order to accomplish this, the library has created an early literacy program series to suit the individual needs of their younger children in the surrounding population. The library breaks their storytimes into different age groups so that the children do not become frustrated that the storytime is too “babyish” for them or too hard. They also do not have strict rules against having the children that are not the proper age in the story times.

The staff make the storytimes fun by singing silly songs or overreacting to the story. They do not keep reading the classic stories just because they are tried and true. They often go out on a limb and read the latest

“This is one of the best kids program I’ve been to and I lived in Colorado, Texas, Tennessee, and Virginia. Love the teachers. They are so silly and really engage the kids. We love this storytime.”

–MELANIE STOTT, MOTHER OF 3

stories or try to keep an eye out for the more humorous ones like *The Dinosaur that Pooped a Planet!* by Tom Fletcher or *Almost Everybody Farts* by Marty Kelley.

“We read very loudly and create motions like the characters would. We encourage them to sing the lyrics to their favorite song loudly or tell them to shout what they think the character in the book should do. A quiet storytime to us is often a sign that the kids are bored,” said Jacklene Oakes, children’s librarian.

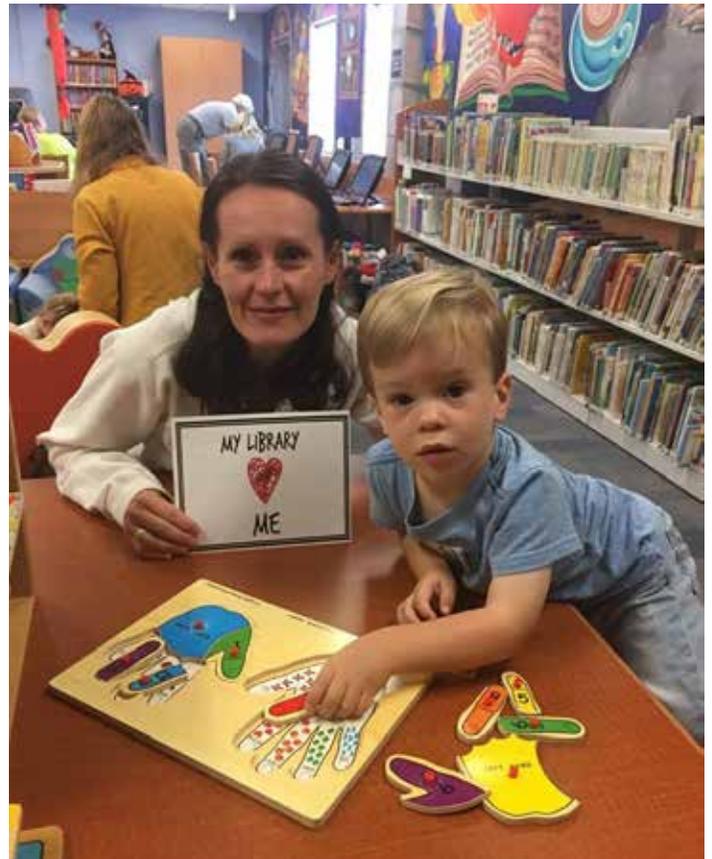
OCEAN CITY LIBRARY FOR: INFANT AND TODDLER STORY TIME SERIES

The Ocean City Free Public Library's commitment to lifelong learning starts at birth. The library offers four storytimes weekly from September to May, including Rhythm & Rhyme for birth to age two (once a week), Toddler Time for two and three year-olds (once a week) and Preschool for four and five year-olds (twice a week). Rhythm & Rhyme programs are multifaceted, visually stimulating, and incorporate music, stories and rhymes around a theme using books, puppets and flannels, music with shakers and scarves, fingerplays and bubbles. The goal is to develop an association of the library with exploration and fun through books.

The staff also assist caregivers in choosing books and help them understand the relationship between reading aloud and development of language. Caregivers are invited to stay after while children play with tunnels, shakers and bubbles. They are given handouts of the finger plays and action rhymes that the children experienced that

day and are encouraged to use them at home. Babies receive a new board book in December and May. Toddler Time incorporates all the ingredients of the baby time but with age appropriate books and puppet shows and includes a variety of instruments for the children to make music.

Preschool builds on toddler and baby storytime



and adds draw/cut and tell stories, and a craft incorporating STEAM disciplines. Babies receive a new board book in December and May and Toddlers and Preschoolers in December. A teacher, the mother of a nine-month old, commented that she likes coming to the program because, "It's multifaceted, visually stimulating, incorporates music, stories and rhymes, and follows a theme."

MULTICULTURAL PROGRAM AWARD

WINNING LIBRARIES

RED BANK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR: LET'S TALK ABOUT RACE

Let's *Talk About Race* was started in 2015 in an effort to expand dialogue and understanding between people of the various races and ethnic backgrounds that make up the Red Bank Community. The last decade has brought new young families and an increase in diversity, and, with it, new problems, but also a willingness and interest in honest discussion. The library felt that there was a need to create a forum to facilitate dialogue between the various groups that call Red Bank home. After formulating a proposal plan, the library looked to the community for ideas to move forward with a series of programs that would focus on race. To evoke conversation by exploring race, cultural identity and class in the context of literary works, they had speakers and used documentaries to stimulate conversations. They discussed incarceration, biracial families, white privilege and more. Due to demand, much of the

programming focused on black/white issues; however, they also highlighted Native Americans, Latinos and Muslims. This year will also include also some DACA and LGBTQ programs.



The programming began with Gilda Rogers, black community educator, writer and activist, who produced and presented the first three programs. Due to the continuing appeal of the program, and the enthusiastic support of the participants, they were able to provide a wide range of programs with quality presenters. On the topic of *Raising Children without Prejudice*, the panel included Teens Against Intolerance. Activists and religious leaders such as Reverend Gil Caldwell, who served with Martin Luther King, and Rabbi Kline have participated. Other presenters have

included leaders from the education field, including Monmouth University's Walter Greason and school superintendent, Jared Rumage.

"This program has made the library a leader in diversity education and brought much positive attention to the library. The library is at the forefront of this important conversation. Finding the right people in the community could be the most difficult and crucial step toward success."

-LINDA HEWITT, CIRCULATION SUPERVISOR / OUTREACH AND PROGRAM COORDINATOR
RED BANK PUBLIC LIBRARY

MAPLEWOOD MEMORIAL LIBRARY & SOUTH ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR:

GIVING TEENS A VOICE: AN OPEN DISCUSSION ON RACE FOR TEENS+

The Maplewood Memorial Library and South Orange Public Library have partnered with the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race to offer a two-part program entitled Giving Teens a Voice: An Open Discussion on Race for Teens+. The Coalition's mission is to create a "racially, culturally and socially integrated" community, and Maplewood and South Orange are both very diverse. The diversity is best reflected in their shared school district, but the community has not found many ways to engage youth voices in these discussions. This program leverages the teen communities they see walk through our doors daily and creates a safe space for them to share their thoughts.

The directors and teen librarians of both libraries met with the coalition to discuss issues regarding race and multiculturalism that teens face. Teens met in small groups, introduced themselves and were asked to answer the question: "Do you feel race has ever played a part in how you have been treated?" The groups then came together and shared their talking points. All attendees watched a short video from a *New York Times* series on race, and then split into groups of parents and teens for discussion. Feedback was wholly positive.

It was extremely useful to have facilitator training and pre-defined questions for groups to launch conversations. This prevented single members of a group from overtaking conversation, as well as allowed jumping off points for groups that struggled to start. The separation of teens and adults created open environments for conversation because both groups felt safe to share. Trained peer facilitators for each age group also helped. While the coalition has the ability to provide this training in the South Orange/Maplewood community, other libraries may need to reach out to a different organization or find their own resources to train conversation moderators.



Due to the short planning period for these events, they relied on student workers from the libraries to serve as facilitators. Students trained as facilitators built leadership skills, which will change their resumes and college applications. By incorporating scenario-based activities, possibly even interactive activities like viewing small sketches using local acting talent, the hope to hear the types of solutions teens feel best address uncomfortable race-related issues.



NEW BRUNSWICK FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR:

HOLI: THE INDIAN FESTIVAL OF COLORS

Holi: *The Indian Festival of Colors* is designed to promote cultural awareness and give participants an opportunity to glimpse the rich traditions of springtime celebrations in India. By remaining a free program year after year, it demonstrates NBFPL's library-wide commitment to always provide no-cost education and experiences to its patrons. This reality is even more impressive given the high quality of music, dance, food and education presented in just one afternoon.

The library, along with Rutgers Indian Graduate Student Association (RIGSA), Rutgers Hindu students Council, Hindi USA, and South Asian Total Health Initiative (SATHI), offer this program closest to the actual date of Holi (determined by the lunar calendar). For the event promotion they collaborate with a few other organizations like New Brunswick Cultural Center, Puerto Rican Action Board (PRAB), Harmony Family Success Center, Lazos America Unida, Rutgers the Collaborative Center for Community Based Research and Service.

NBFPL Holi is successful because it engages all five senses. It is an invitation to the whole person to experience a culture in all possible ways. For touch,



participants are welcomed by volunteers who bestow a tika on forehead (a mark of honor made with powder), and henna on their hands; for taste and smell, participants sample traditional food; for sight, spectacularly colorful regional clothing and jewelry adorn the walls and display cases; and for sound, dancers and musicians thrill onlookers with their representations of Indian performance.

The event has grown into an annual gathering of people from all backgrounds celebrating the arrival of spring. In a way, that is the goal of any multicultural program: accessing our shared humanity through the vehicle of one culture's beautiful interpretation.

"I had a wonderful afternoon on September 24 at the SAMBA TO SALSA performance at your library. Talented, professional musicians introduced us to the magic of drums and other instruments with their music – making and careful education about their instruments. All was so well organized by a gracious curator named Ingrid Betancourt, of your library, who knew the performers well; quietly brought out the best."

-ULRIKE KLOPPERS, LIBRARY PATRON





SCOTCH PLAINS LIBRARY FOR: **OUTDOOR FUN**

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