



News Release

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Parker Middle School Library of Howell Public Schools Is First School Library to Win Annual State Librarian's Excellence Award

November 8, 2012

DETROIT – Parker Middle School in Howell is the recipient of the 2012 State Librarian's Excellence Award for superior customer services, State Librarian Nancy Robertson announced today.

The Library of Michigan Foundation annually gives this prestigious honor, which includes a trophy and \$2,000 in privately-raised funds used to enhance library service, to one Michigan library. Robertson presented the award during the Michigan Library Association annual conference in Detroit.

Kalamazoo Public Library and Hopkins District Library each received a Citation of Excellence, which included a \$500 prize and a trophy.

The State Librarian's Excellence Award is sponsored by the Roger and June Mendel Fund of the Library of Michigan Foundation. Gifts from Martin L. Gibbs and Carole Sorensen and from Elaine M. Logan supported the citations of excellence.

"It's a thrill to make this year's award to a school library," said State Superintendent Mike Flanagan. "Libraries in schools are of paramount importance in helping Michigan's K-12 students succeed in their educational endeavors, so that they can be career and college ready."

Robertson added, "With the complexity of information resources out there today, the professionally trained school librarian and the authenticated hard-copy and online resources the library provides access to are essential to teachers in building their curricula and lesson plans and to the students utilizing those resources in their projects and studies."

Katherine Lester, Parker Middle School librarian, said, "I am honored that the Parker Middle School Library is receiving the State Librarian's Excellence Award. We work very hard to ensure that the library is a "hub" for our school and to empower our students to be enthusiastic readers, critical thinkers, skillful researchers, and ethical users of information. I would like to

thank Sue Muntz, principal, and Bob Starkey, assistant principal, as well as the fabulous Parker Middle School teachers, parents, and students for supporting our library. I hope that by receiving this award, we can shine light on the wonderful and necessary work being done by school librarians across Michigan.”

Robertson acknowledged that each year it is a tough task to select one winner from all of the distinguished nominations.

She said that some of the highlights of what Parker Middle School Library has done to earn this year’s award include: the thoughtfulness and work put into the move of the library over the summer months and the implementation of a new online catalog; getting a grant for a cart of iPads that can be checked out for classroom use; promotion of reading throughout the summer and getting the Summer Reading Program information to fifth- and sixth-grade parents in the spring so the in-coming sixth graders can participate during the summer; and the active participation by Ms. Lester on school-wide and state and nation-wide committees, including the school’s Data Team, School Improvement Team, Positive Behavior System for anti-bullying, the district’s Instructional Technology Team, and more. The school’s teachers worked together and created a video highlighting and advocating for the essential nature of all that the school library provides them and the students.

Two additional libraries – Kalamazoo Public Library and Hopkins District Library – also were recognized for their devotion to customer service and earned SLEA Citations of Excellence.

Kalamazoo Public Library created a Customer Service Plan in 2007 and has sustained since then a Customer Service Committee that continues to define, measure, recognize, and reward excellence in customer service. The most recent revision of its service plan resulted in a Code of Service that outlines and defines the level of service it expects from its staff. In addition to this strong proactive focus on customer service, the library also forges strong collaborative relationships with community organizations, particularly its schools. In response to the Kalamazoo Promise, the library used creative thinking and service attitude to provide library cards to 1,000 first-grade students. This helps contribute to the Governor’s goal to have Michigan students reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Even though it is operating at a significantly decreased number of staff than three years ago, the library continues to meet its mission to create a community where people aspire to learn, engage and thrive.

Director Ann Rorbaugh said, “We are honored to be recognized. Customer service at KPL has many dimensions ... one-on-one desk type interactions; partnering with other local agencies especially the Kalamazoo Public Schools; and the materials, programs, and services we offer to all ages. The state recognition is very affirming to our staff and board.”

Hopkins District Library has maximized its customer service and found ways to use the limited budget their small rural public library has. It has provided the community with a new community/library center with all the features of both and the cost of only one. The director, Natalie Bazan, worked with Congressman Fred Upton’s office and through the Library of Congress’ Surplus Books Program, brought home \$10,000 worth of books to its collection and only needed to pay for materials to process them. Its “Sharing Library Ideas” website is constantly providing patron suggestions for service as well as offering suggested programming ideas from other libraries. In this very low-income area, the library is working to give back to the community by building a cart for anyone to drop off their excess fruit and produce free for the

community; gathering coats/toys/food for the upcoming holiday season; and working with a tax preparer to set up a day at the library to help patrons understand and file their tax returns.

Director Natalie Bazan said, “Having begun just over a year ago as director of Hopkins District Library, I am thrilled that the changes we have been making to our library, service, programs, and community have been recognized and appreciated. Connecting with our community in new and exciting ways and providing for their needs as an informal community center have been our goals from the beginning.”

This year’s State Librarian’s Excellence Award recipients were selected by a committee including the state librarian, a Library of Michigan reference librarian, the immediate past president of MAME (school librarians association), the director of the Capital Area District Library, the Communications Coordinator for the Michigan State University Libraries, the director of the library at Consumers Energy Corporation in Jackson, and the director of Novi Public Library (last year’s SLEA winner).

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The Library of Michigan – Michigan’s official state library agency for more than 175 years – is part of the Michigan Department of Education. To learn more, visit www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan.