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Association**

Press Release

The Illinois Library Association's Youth Services Forum is presenting this year's Golden Ticket Award to Gail Lundgren, Coordinator of Early Childhood Services, at the Gail Borden Public Library District in Elgin. This award is presented annually to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution in library services to young people in her or his local community. This year's award is again being sponsored by Rob Zimmers from Quality Books, Inc. (QBI).

Gail's career, as a librarian at the Gail Borden Public Library District, spans over 35 years. Along with 1975 Davis Cup recipient Mary Greenawalt, Gail created and developed the library's very innovative Children's (Early Learning) Center in 1977. The focus of this center was to stimulate a preschooler's mind and included a preschool slide, live animals, puppets and puzzles to use or check-out, a craft area for parents to use with their preschoolers, toys, games and many beautiful picture and board books.

Her recent contributions include reorganizing the picture collection into theme categories, as well as creating early literacy, science, and dramatic play centers in the Early Learning Center. Mrs. Lundgren has initiated many dynamic programs including: *Baby Fest!* (an information fair about babies); *Welcome Baby! Baby's First Library Visit*, (which invites parents to sign up for baby's first card); *1000 Books Before Kindergarten*; *Family Lunch Picnics*; *Sensory Storytime*; *Read, Create, Play* (a series of programs to help children develop early learning skills, through stories, creativity and play); *Discover & Explore: STEAM Learning Centers* (funded by a \$1500 ALSC grant); and *Fun with Friends* (a drop-in activity for children with parents or caregivers in celebration of their TV friends). Gail's programs emphasize to parents the importance of early literacy skills and the role of the library as a community center where people can connect.

As stated in her letter of nomination: "What is amazing about Gail is that although she is a veteran librarian, she is always looking for ways to provide new services and find new ways to reach families. Gail genuinely cares about the young children of our community. She wants them to learn but understands that the best learning takes place through play and fun. She serves on the Elgin Partnership for Early Learning team, whose vision is to engage the whole community in preparing children to succeed in school and in life, and whose mission is to collaborate with partners to ensure that children are ready for kindergarten."

The Golden Ticket Award will be presented at the Awards Gala held on Friday evening, October 23rd, during the 2015 Illinois Library Conference in Peoria.

Gail will also be recognized during the Youth Services Forum's Author Breakfast held on Friday morning at 8:30 am during the conference.

For further information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

For Immediate Release