



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Because Libraries Matter

**Illinois Library Association
33 W. Grand Ave., Suite 401
Chicago, IL 60654-6799**

**Phone: 312.644.1896
Fax: 312.644.1899
Email: ila@ila.org**

Press Release

The Illinois Library Association's Youth Services Forum is presenting this year's Golden Ticket Award to Natalie Williams, Head of Youth Services at the Indian Prairie Public Library. 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 being sponsored by Brainfuse.

Natalie Williams began her library career at Chicago Public Library as a children's librarian. She was also Head of Youth Services at South Portland Public Library (ME), prior to her return to Illinois in 2013, when she became Head of Youth Services at Indian Prairie Public Library. Natalie has indeed made an outstanding contribution to this library's community through the remarkable Prairie Patch community garden project and related programming for children. Natalie launched the Prairie Patch project in 2016, partnering with a local nonprofit. Children and volunteers of all ages practice gardening skills as Garden Buddies, learning science and math while working together through the growing season. This project benefits the community directly: Garden Giveaway days began in 2018, providing fresh produce to families in need.

Since its inception, Natalie's amazing community garden project has spun off numerous S.T.E.M. programs including Art Lab, Science Lab, and (new this year) Pollinators Lab. The garden itself has grown from an initial 20 raised beds to 40, and has been enhanced by a Story Walk, Sensory Garden, and memorial insect garden. Truly a community garden, library staff contribute via the composting program, and local Eagle Scouts have installed a rain barrel watering system. Children have ultimately benefitted by

learning not only about gardening, but also how they can make a difference in their world. Natalie Williams has made an impressive impact on children and families through her innovative community garden project- the Prairie Patch. Congratulations to Natalie, the 2019 recipient of the ILA Youth Services Forum Golden Ticket Award.

The Golden Ticket Award will be presented at the Awards Luncheon to be held on Tuesday, October 22, during the 2019 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference in Tinley Park.

For further information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

For Immediate Release