



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

Roberta Koscielski, Deputy Director of the Peoria Public Library, is the 2020 recipient of the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Librarian of the Year Award. This award recognizes a librarian’s distinguished service and leadership in Illinois Libraries. The award is presented and sponsored by Today’s Business Solution, Inc. (TBS).

Roberta Koscielski is a passionate, dedicated champion of her community, her library’s role in it, and the profession at large. She is constantly seeking new opportunities for the library to have a voice and be a force in and for the community. In her more than 35 years working in the Peoria Public Library, she’s forged myriad connections with city leaders, groups, and organizations, all helping underscore the library’s importance in the community. For instance, she spearheaded the development of Peoria Reads!, a committee uniting a range of local leaders and organizations to collaborate on developing engaging annual One Book, One City events. Following the long-running success of Peoria Reads! and other programs, city leaders approached Koscielski for the library’s help in promoting critical city initiatives through literature, including *Don’t Shoot: One Man, a Street Fellowship, and the End of Violence in Inner-City America* by David Kennedy and *Dreamland: The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic* by Sam Quinones. In both cases, Koscielski secured relevant grant funding to expand the library’s role in the initiatives beyond simply distributing the books on which they were based. Indeed, the library now (years later) hosts after hours gang violence “call-ins” in coordination with local police department as part of the Don’t Shoot initiative.

As for spreading awareness of the opioid epidemic in the community, what started with a series of grant-funded discussion programs relating to the opioid epidemic, grew into a major training initiative to recognize opioid overdoses and administer naloxone, a measure that truly has the potential to save lives, given that three such overdoses have already taken place in the Main Library. Her work to raise public and staff awareness of the opioid epidemic in the community has led to her being recognized as one of the 2018 *Library Journal* Movers and Shakers and a “new first responder” in the opioid epidemic by *U.S. News and World Report*.

Beyond these important programs and collaborative initiatives, Koscielski further develops a wide range of engaging and meaningful adult programming. One such example is the Peoria Speaks series funded by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council, which invites the community to learn about and discuss other critical issues, such as human trafficking, city policing, local arts, Alzheimer’s care, and civility and empathy in our daily lives.

Koscielski’s admirable service extends well beyond the library’s walls, permeating the greater community and library profession. From her decades long volunteer involvement with Peoria’s Common Place, first as an adult literacy tutor and currently on its board of directors, as well as serving on the board of the Neighborhood House, another local service organization, she’s a veritable pillar of the community outside of work hours. She also contributes to furthering the library profession through multiple presentations at the ILA annual conference and contributing material to the ILA Reporter and other publications. While the field of truly excellent and admirable librarians is crowded in Illinois, in her gentle, hardworking way, Roberta Koscielski stands out!

The Librarian of the Year Award will be presented at a ceremony that will be held in conjunction with the Illinois Library Association Annual Conference, which will take place virtually in October.

For further information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

For Immediate Release