



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Because Libraries Matter

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Ana Beltran and Elizabeth Freebairn Selected as 2024 Recipients of the Illinois Library Association Innovative Programs and Services Award

Ana Beltran, Adult Services Assistant at the Addison Public Library, and Elizabeth Freebairn, Adult Services Specialist at the Addison Public Library, are the recipients of the 2024 Illinois Library Association (ILA) Innovative Programs and Services Award for their outstanding work on the library's ELL Books & Bites Book Club. The award recognizes an individual, group, department, or library that has planned or presented specialized or innovative programs or services.

The ELL Books & Bites Book Club is a program designed to support English Language Learners (ELL) in the Addison community. The program provides a welcoming environment where participants can practice their English reading and comprehension skills through engaging book discussions and social activities. Participants are given a copy of the book upon registration, which they can keep. Over four weeks, participants read the book individually at home and together during group reading sessions, followed by discussions over dinner. This combination of individual and group reading aims to foster a sense of community and belonging among its members while enhancing their language skills.

"We could not have created this program without the continuous support of our library," said Ana Beltran. "It's been incredibly rewarding to be able to work alongside Elizabeth in creating Books & Bites. The participants are full of joy, and they always

thrive during our book discussions. We all learn something new from each other at every session."

The ELL Books & Bites Book Club has become a vital resource for English learners in Addison, offering a unique blend of literacy and community-building activities. The program has received high praise from participants, who appreciate the opportunity to improve their language skills in a supportive and enjoyable setting.

Since the program began in May 2023, the group has read a variety of popular titles, including *How Not To Drown in a Glass of Water* by Angie Cruz, *I Am Malala* (Young Readers Version) by Malala Yousafzai, *What I Know For Sure* by Oprah Winfrey, and *The Archer* by Paulo Coelho. Coming up in September, the group will be reading *American Like Me* edited by America Ferrera.

Beltran and Freebairn's dedication to creating inclusive and accessible library services has made a significant impact on the Addison community. Their innovative approach to language learning and community engagement exemplifies the Addison Public Library's values of providing opportunities to explore, create, connect, and offer dynamic and relevant programming.

The Illinois Library Association Innovative Programs and Services Award will be presented at an awards ceremony during the 2024 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference. The conference will take place October 8-10, 2024, in Peoria, Illinois.

For more information, contact the Illinois Library Association.

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About the Illinois Library Association

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) is a professional membership organization that represents Illinois libraries and the millions who depend on them. Founded in 1896, it is the third-largest state library association and serves as a chapter within the American Library Association. ILA is comprised of 2,000 personal and more than 500 institutional members, made up of public, academic, school, and special libraries, as well as librarians, library staff, trustees, students, and library vendors.