



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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**Debbie Sanchez Selected as 2024 Recipient of the
Illinois Library Association Youth Services Achievement Award**

The Illinois Library Association (ILA) Youth Services Forum presents this year's Youth Services Achievement Award to Debbie Sanchez, Children's Services Assistant at Addison Public Library (APL). This annual award is presented by the ILA Youth Services Forum and Brainfuse to a non-degreed (MLIS) individual working in the Youth Services Department for outstanding local contributions to library services to young people. Individuals nominated for the award must have created and implemented library programs, services, and/or initiatives in the community they serve that promote a love of learning. The award recipient must have positively impacted the lives of children.

Debbie Sanchez began her career at the Addison Public Library in 1997 and started working in the Children's Department in 2000. Over the past 24 years, she has made a large contribution to the Addison Public Library's Children's Department and the community she serves. During her years at APL, she accomplished many notable achievements.

In 2003, Sanchez wrote and secured a grant to support an outreach literacy program for low-income children. In 2009, she drafted a proposal to add video games to the library's collection, and during the pandemic, she was instrumental in helping transition staff from presenting programs virtually to bringing them back to in-person. She also served

as a member of her library's Patron Experience Committee in 2022. While on this committee she helped develop a training program for staff that included patron experience guidelines to ensure that the library provided consistent service to all patrons. As part of this initiative, Sanchez created a list of best practices for the Children's Services Department, which ensured that all children's services staff provided a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for library patrons. Most recently, Sanchez planned and implemented a storytime called Birth to 3 Jamboree, and a playtime program called Toddler Time.

In addition to creating new services for her community, Sanchez has also worked diligently to improve established services. When children were coming back to storytimes after the pandemic, Sanchez advocated for focusing these programs on building social and early literacy skills in young people who were impacted by the isolating effects of the pandemic. Sanchez also worked with childcare centers in the community to reimagine visits, so they better met the needs of the children who attended these institutions.

One of Sanchez's greatest strengths is her ability to make every child who visits the library feel special. She knows regular visitors by name and goes out of her way to greet and engage children at the library. Sanchez educates parents and caregivers on the importance of play to promote early literacy skills through her interactions with the library's young patrons.

Debbie Sanchez's continued dedication to her library and community as well as the outstanding additions she has made to her library are why the Youth Services Forum believes that she is the best choice for this year's award. Congratulations to Debbie Sanchez, the 2024 recipient of the ILA Youth Services Achievement Award!

The Illinois Library Association Youth Services Achievement 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.