



ILLINOIS LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Illinois Library Association

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**Jade Parks Selected as 2025 Recipient of the Illinois Library Association
Young Adult Library Professional of the Year Award**

Jade Parks, Teen Services Coordinator at the Downers Grove Public Library (DGPL), is the 2025 recipient of the Illinois Library Association (ILA) Young Adult Library Professional of the Year Award. This award, presented by ILA and the Young Adult Services Forum, recognizes an Illinois young adult library professional who is making an outstanding contribution to library services to young adults in their community and beyond by creating and implementing library programs and services that identify and meet the needs of the young adults in their community.

The award is sponsored by Sourcebooks and honors the positive impact Sharon Ball has had on young adults and young adult librarians as she served as a consultant for the North Suburban Library System and beyond.

In less than two years, Parks transformed the unstaffed DGPL teen room into a flourishing young adult community space that experienced a 25% increase in use under her leadership. She helped create a new teen desk staffed during peak hours, populated the teen room with unique teen-friendly furniture, stocking the room with essential supplies such as chargers & dry-erase boards, and expanded passive programming in the form of additional in-library use Maker Kits

and a new Question of the Week activity that helped build positive relationships between teens and staff. Parks grew teen services so much that a second full-time teen librarian position was created in early 2025.

Parks recognized the importance of teen mental health and partnered with the National Institute on Mental Illness (NAMI) DuPage County to start a social-emotional well-being program series called Teen Life: Conversations. In addition, she started a peer-led support group facilitated by library social work interns called Teen Table Talk. During this time, she launched a Teen Library Council, which empowered teens to view themselves as real library stakeholders. This work is quantifiable: DGPL saw a 21% decrease in library-wide incidents after revamping the library's space, staffing, and support for teens.

Parks knows the importance of reaching teens outside the library's physical building, so she created a Discord server for DGPL teens to stay updated virtually on library programs, volunteering opportunities, and reading suggestions. In addition, she also brought library programs on the road to local schools so that she could meet teens where they are. And since busy students do not always have the same free time as adults, Parks coordinated special after-hours programs just for teens, such as Nerf Night and Murder Mystery Night. Her leadership, creativity, and passion have made a lasting impact on both the library and the Downers Grove community.

The Illinois Library Association Young Adult Professional of the Year Award will be presented at an awards ceremony during the 2025 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference. The conference will take place on October 14-16, 2025, in Rosemont, 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 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.