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Municipal Library Earns Friend of School Libraries award

APRIL 20TH 2021 BY DEE LOFLIN

Municipal Library Earns Friend of School Libraries award

Poplar Bluff Municipal Library Director Sue Crites Szostak received the 2021 Friend of School Libraries award from the Missouri Association of School Libraries during a virtual conference that began on Monday, April 19.

The director was nominated for the statewide award by O’Neal Elementary Librarian Ashley Robertson, who previously worked with Crites Szostak at the public library.

“We are so fortunate to have the PBML in our community,” stated Robertson, noting that the materials made available serve the entire district. “From animated books for younger students to electronic resources for older students. They are helping our students inside the library and outside their walls.”

The library maintains a website featuring children and teen sections with databases such as Hoopla, OverDrive and Tumblebooks. To access the resources for research or homework, the library has issued eCards, and continues to provide Wi-Fi hot spots and free photocopies for students.

From the district’s 1:1 laptop initiative in 2013/14 up until a virtual learning option was offered this school year in response to the public health emergency, library staff has reached out to identify ways to help. “It’s just what we do,” said Crites Szostak, who credits her team for the award.

“I think we did things any community can copy and emulate, within our budget, using resources we had on hand,” she continued. “eCards don’t cost anything. We already pay for databases; why not make them available to a broader audience? The website we already had; might as well make it school and parent-friendly. [Our staff] is already here.”

The library recently opened up a secondary branch in addition to its historic downtown location, on Kanell Boulevard. According to Crites Szostak, the expansion was designed to create a study space and provide services closer to where the district has shifted along with the population over the decades.

Pictured: Sue Crites Szostak, director of the Poplar Bluff Municipal Library, received the Friend of School Libraries award for her working relationship with the R-I school system.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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