



Libby McWhorter receives the Outstanding Children's Services Award

Libby McWhorter, longtime Children's Librarian at the Boyle County Public Library, has been named the 2022 recipient of Kentucky Public Library Association's "Miss Pickle" Outstanding Children's Services Award.

The purpose of the award is to recognize and emphasize excellence in developing and providing children's library services in the local community. This award is named in honor of Wanda "Miss Pickle" Brown, former children's librarian in Meade County, Kentucky, because of her love for children and dedication to their unique library needs.

Libby McWhorter has spent her 40-year career with the Library serving children and families, and shows no signs of stopping. To honor this outstanding achievement and in recognition of her service and dedication to Danville-Boyle County, the library will host to a Celebration Reception at the library on Thursday, April 14 at 12:00 PM. All are invited to attend.

McWhorter was nominated by Youth Services Manager Kinsey Hisle, who works closely with McWhorter on a daily basis. "It was readily apparent to me pretty much from day one of working alongside Libby that she was a special children's librarian and beloved by her community," said Hisle. "During the past few years, I've been close enough to witness how she gives her all in her work and always puts the kids first. This past year was particularly challenging on a number of levels, and Libby went above and beyond in her service to families. She has always deserved this award since I've known her, but this year I felt that it was important to nominate her because it might mean a bit more after going through difficult times."

There is a word limit on the nomination and Hisle's first draft was four times as long as it should have been. "It is easy to brag on Libby and all of her great work here at the Library," explained Hisle. "I did my best to try to capture that within a tight word limit and then it was up to the state committee to see the special spark the library staff and Boyle County families see in Libby every day. I was thrilled when I found out she won! Our desks are very close together so I had to not react too much in order to maintain the surprise."

The past two years have brought many new trials for all. Throughout it all, McWhorter never wavered in her commitment to serve her patrons. She was the first on the library staff to try a Facebook Live program, just three days after the Library closed due to the pandemic in March 2020, reaching thousands of people in those initial days of uncertainty. She continued to provide live and recorded Storytime, craft, and cooking programs, also adding ASL interpretation, bringing connection and continuity for the library's youngest patrons.

In the summer of 2021, McWhorter gave out an average of 100 activity kits per week for her virtual programs and Storytimes, which she was able to host in-person in the library parking lot. That year she also suffered a personal loss. She credits her work serving children as her source of light during this time. She worked to safely bring back more in-person programs that year.

Circulation Supervisor Kathy Phillips has worked with McWhorter for many years and collaborates with her on certain children's programs. When asked to share her thoughts about her colleague, she was happy to express her admiration. "Libby has so many great qualities but I think one that stands out is that she stops and listens to the children always. Libby knows the children by name and still gives hugs," said Phillips. "I have many memories after working so long with Libby, but to this day if I have a question about something,

I go to her first because she never makes me feel bad for not knowing the answer. I think Libby is so well loved because she loves so well.” continued Phillips.

When asked about McWhorter’s service to the community, outreach librarian Jana Oliver shared that while McWhorter may be small in stature, her personality and love for others is evident in all the ways that she interacts with the patrons in the library and out in the community. “I have watched Libby as she uses her soft, sing-song voice to do ‘The Five Little Monkeys’ while holding her monkey ‘MoMo’ and her crocodile puppet,” said Oliver. “The children instantly join in with the rhythm and many will lean in as close as possible to catch every word and touch her magical puppets. It is truly amazing to watch Ms. Libby in her element. What makes her so special is that every inch of her is filled with a love and passion for all children and her desire to teach them to love books and reading.”

Currently McWhorter is piloting a “Stories AT HOME” program for families to have virtual visits with her to learn early literacy skills. More than a storytime, this is a chance for kids to learn and parents to ask individual questions during their one-on-one time with Boyle County’s beloved expert, Ms. Libby.

“Libby’s love for children and her expression of it by promoting literacy in Boyle County are legendary,” said Assistant Library Director Colleen Hall. “She has been well known and loved in the community of Children’s Librarians for many years. It is so gratifying to see her honored with statewide recognition!”

“Over 40 years, Libby has made a difference in the lives of thousands of children, many of whom are now bringing their own children and grandchildren to the Library for her storytimes,” said Library Director Georgia de Araujo. “What more important work is there than to educate and inspire children? No one is more deserving of this award.”

Hisle sums up the praise. “I am so pleased that the state library association is giving Libby the higher level thanks and recognition she deserves for her years of excellent service to kids and families,” said Hisle. “Libby is a treasure in this community. I’m so happy that she will now forever have the honor of this award so she knows how much we value and appreciate her.”

Community members of all ages are encouraged to attend the reception celebrating McWhorter’s achievement as well as her years of exceptional service to countless children and families.