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I Love My
Librarian!
2011 Award

NOMINATION FOR

Jennifer O. Keohane

Business Outreach Librarian
The Simsbury Public Library
Simsbury, Connecticut

NOMINATED BY

Ellen Cartledge
Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Judy Rosenthal
Hartford, Connecticut

1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets him/her apart?

Jennifer Keohane is a strikingly intelligent Business Outreach Librarian. With a background in business and library science, she has a unique combination of outreach, marketing, teaching, customer service, product development, project management, finance, information technology, and research skills. Her contributions in providing services for the unemployed and business community at large have been unparalleled. Her enthusiasm and resourcefulness has set her apart from her peers as she has reached out to the community through innovative and timely programs. The excellence of her programs is known throughout the state. Her warm, welcoming, and engaging manner provides a pleasurable experience to all patrons. Her integrity, professionalism, creativity, brainstorming, and keen research skills make her a standout as a business research librarian. Case in point, when you are with Jennifer, or talking about Jennifer, you just need to mention her first name and everyone knows her and of her stellar reputation.

2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and made your experience of the library a positive one. For instance, did the nominee inspire in you a love for literature; assist you in a project or finding other information?

Jennifer saw the need for business programs and, particularly, programs for the unemployed, way before the current economic crisis. In 1999, she designed and launched a public library-based "Business Resource Center" (BRC) that identifies and addresses the information needs of the business community and town government. But her mission has expanded way beyond those two audiences.

She collaborated and partnered with community teachers to offer technology training to patrons on a regular basis. You can attend her programs and learn about the full suite of Microsoft programs and you are limited only by your own determination in becoming an expert in those skills. When "social media" was just a term, Jennifer offered an evening program on the subject, and over 250 people attended. It was just the beginning of her programs in that field, as you can now attend classes on that subject in the Library.

Her career-oriented programs offer the unemployed not only a place to learn, but also a place to collaborate and network. She provides programs on resume preparation; interview techniques; how to find jobs in difficult times; how to stay positive and motivated; how to transition your career -- the list is endless. Jennifer serves as a wonderful resource for speakers who so willingly give of their time and expertise. She has been generous with her time by providing her services throughout the state in order to reach the thousands of CT folk that remain jobless.

She also reaches out to the younger generation. Her new program, "Be a Young Entrepreneur -- Real World Training with Local Businesses" (based on JA's "Be an Entrepreneurial Program") is geared for the 18-24 year old, who is finding it difficult to obtain work, and would like to create his/her own job and be his/her own boss. It is a free, nine-week course taught by a group of local, successful business owners. The program is a mix of solid business training and informal mentoring sessions.

Her marketing presentations, both publicly and online, are clear, inviting, and totally on point. In fact, she wrote an incredible article, "Two Million Dollars in Your Wallet," which focuses on borrowing books; training staff and user on how to use library resources; how one can obtain business leads; and making use of the expertise of the research librarian.

Yet, you ask how she has helped me and made my experience of the library a positive one. As an unemployed, former corporate librarian, I came to Jennifer for advice, career counseling, and encouragement. She began a series of conversations with me that helped me identify my next direction and how I could get there. Her programs helped me to update my technical and research skills, and

provided assistance with a resume, interview preps, and other career tools. She became my biggest cheerleader, introducing me to people who could assist with my career development and ultimately helping me land my "dream job." Jennifer has the innate ability to work with dreamers and make their dreams, reality.

3. How has the librarian made a difference in the community? Please be specific.

Her partnerships and collaborations with the many constituencies in the community are outstanding. She provides one-on-one business planning, marketing and research assistance for entrepreneurs in the Greater Hartford area resulting in the launch and growth of many local businesses. As a business research librarian, she actively networks and collaborates with local businesses, federal, state and local business organizations to evaluate existing programs and services and to promote new programs and services based on market analysis. She uses her strong teaching ability, formal instructional theory education, and market knowledge to produce training that meets the information needs of clients of all ages and backgrounds. She also evaluates and selects a wide variety of print, non-print, and electronic business resources in order to best meet the needs of users' and her budget constraints.

What she can be most proud of is her ability to create, organize, and promote timely, relevant and free business and career programs. In an 8-year timespan, over 6700 people attended the more than 300 programs offered by the BRC. More than 45% of the attendees are first-time participants. She is a pacesetter -- in April 2003, the BRC received a Connecticut Award for Excellence in Public Library Service.

Yet, she also contributes to other organizations within the community. As a Guest Lecturer at the University of Hartford, Entrepreneurial Center, she instructs entrepreneurs enrolled in the "Fast Trac" Series about resources and search strategies to help them find information critical to the planning, launching and growth of a small business. Working with emerging businesses is both a joy and challenge to Jennifer. Helping them find low cost and effective sources of data to help them evaluate their business ideas and marketing plans is very rewarding to her and that enthusiasm and energy comes across in her classes. She acts as an inspiration to her students.

She also collaborates with the JETS Program in West Hartford, CT -- a non-sectarian program of Jewish Family Services of Greater Hartford -- in providing career-oriented events for the unemployed and underemployed. As the JETS Program Coordinator it is my privilege to work with Jennifer, and to get her perspective and advice on the economy in the state.

But her focus is not only on the business community or the unemployed. When a TEDx event was suggested for Simsbury, it was only natural that the town would

turn to Jennifer. TED, a nonprofit devoted to "Ideas Worth Spreading", originally brought together people from three worlds: technology, entertainment, and design. Its scope has become much broader. Through its TEDx program, it gives local communities, organizations, and individuals the opportunity to stimulate dialogue through TED-like experiences at the local level. TEDx events are planned and coordinated independently. Jennifer, as Co-Chair, planned and coordinated the event. With Jennifer's energy and enthusiasm, the event was a huge success. It drew people not only from Simsbury, but surrounding communities. As her Co-Chair said of Jennifer: "Jennifer Keohane is one of those people who combines vision with getting things done. Jennifer and I co-chaired the inaugural TEDxSimsbury conference. In addition to arranging for the Simsbury Public Library to host the event, she brought in critical people and resources to get key tasks accomplished. Jennifer is one of those rare colleagues who not only partners with you to produce outstanding events but becomes a trusted friend in the process."

4. How has the library, and the nominee, improved the quality of your life?

Jennifer has improved the quality of life, not only for the town of Simsbury, but for individuals, like myself, from all over CT. I come from a town that is a minimum 45-minute commute from Simsbury, but I attended their technology and career-oriented programming. I, as have many others, been able to update my technical skills, keep current with business and social media trends, and gain valuable career skills.

She has improved the quality of life of diverse communities throughout the state. Here are quotes from a few of the people who have recommended Jennifer.

First, from a woman who runs a small business:

"Jennifer is a woman of depth and dimension. She brings a corporate background into the non-profit sections but she is also a person of vision, with the creativity and ability to manage large programs from top to bottom. Add to that, her careful and effective use of technology to serve the needs of her clients, and, in my opinion, she is unmatched.

She has a heart for small business owners and her understanding of event planning and programming results in creative gatherings of people where everyone benefits through collaboration. She also has an eye for marketing and an ability to quickly and concisely add value.

There isn't anyone I can think of that is known and respected by so many people who have benefited from her work both personally and professionally. I am one of them and I am grateful."

Another business person states:

"Jennifer is one of those naturally helpful people who channels her energy, enthusiasm, experience and entrepreneurial thinking to making a difference in the lives of the diverse population she serves in Simsbury and beyond. She has the rare ability to offer lots of great ideas, while still connecting largely through being a great listener. I speak as someone who has worked with her as a resource (workshop facilitator) and as a beneficiary of the programming provided by Business Outreach."

Others echo these comments:

"Jennifer has been a valuable resource to me, my company, and my clients for years. She has a unique mix of business and library science talents which lend themselves to helping business owners with their strategic planning and business development activities. Without a doubt, Jennifer Keohane is one of the most brilliant, shining gems that supports Connecticut's business community."

"Jennifer's enthusiasm, attention to detail and genuine interest in people shine through in all that she does. The workshops and presentations she organizes are always impressive, thought provoking and well received. She is a pleasure to work with and maintains a calm demeanor even under stressful situations."

"Jennifer has been a great resource for me in many aspects of my business development. She provides valuable feedback allowing me to decide which avenue would be best for my business. She's able to provide original ideas, different approaches and creative insights. I will continue to value Jennifer's direct approach, opinion and original ideas as I continue to grow my business. Jennifer you are truly a valuable asset."

"Jennifer is the go-to business outreach librarian in Connecticut. 8 years ago when I launched my business Jennifer helped me in the process. Today whenever I have a business or marketing dilemma, the first person I contact is Jennifer. The business community, and the town of Simsbury have a great resource in Jennifer."

(NOTE: This nomination was also made on behalf of Judy Rosenthal, JETS Volunteer Program Facilitator and Moderator. Judy resides in Hartford, CT).

5. How does the nominee make the library a better place?

The Library should be the cultural, intellectual, and learning center of the community, where all come to collaborate and participate in community life. Often this is not the case, as resources have dwindled and libraries lose sight of their mission. But Jennifer's actions and activities have helped place the Simsbury Public Library at the center of Simsbury's community life. She has led the way in outreach to the business community, to the unemployed, to the technologically-challenged, making "lifelong learning" a consistent theme in everything she does.

She has positioned the Business Resource Center as the vibrant center of business resources for the Farmington Valley Connecticut area. As Jennifer herself says, she is a "connector of people and of information. My passion is enabling my clients to pursue their dreams and move forward with their business, career, or financial goals." At the Simsbury Public Library, those dreams and goals can come true.