

Nominee: Lynn Hurt

Brown Library

Virginia Western Community College/Roanoke, Virginia

Nominator: Elizabeth Wilmer

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

Though she would rather be in the stacks helping a student find a book, one week after the unflappable Lynn Hurt became the Coordinator of Library Services in 2010 at Virginia Western Community College (VWCC) she had to work with contractors on a new library renovation, temporarily condense two floors of service into one floor downstairs, weed 65,000 books from the collection, buy furniture, add study spaces and a technology center, move the library staff back upstairs, unveil a new check out system and, while it was happening, maintain an office in a former storage closet.

Since Lynn began working at the college more than 25 years ago in the Admissions Office, she has never wavered in her love of students or books. Although she is best known for her wry sense of humor and genuine smile; Lynn's enthusiasm for the library and the mission of the community college make her an effective promoter of information literacy on campus and advocate for the relevance of the written word with faculty and students.

2. Please discuss how the nominee has helped you and/or others and made your experience of the library a more positive one.

Although the majority of 12,000 plus students at Virginia Western most likely do not know her name, librarian Lynn Hurt has been instrumental and taken the lead in transforming the library into a positive force at the Community College by very literally shaping the infrastructure and resources of Brown Library to meet the needs of 21st century learners.

Brown Library was built in 1967 and by the time Lynn Hurt began working at the library in early 2000 it was already in desperate need of updating, refreshing and renovating. Lynn had been the Interim Library Coordinator since 2008, but when she took over the Library Coordinator position in 2010 she literally only had one-week before demolition began on the renovation of two floors of the Brown Library building. Undergoing

renovations is never an easy process and ultimately the library staff, services and student areas were reduced from two floors to one. Frankly, she made the entire process look easy, when it wasn't, with her always can-do, positive approach to any challenge. Lynn had to determine how to physically accommodate all the employees in spaces that were not designed for offices all the while continuing to provide high quality services to students, faculty and staff.

Lynn was instrumental in leading the planning and implementation for the project (a two-phased process), from 2010 to 2012, and was extremely influential in adding collaborative study spaces and a technology center on the main floor and print resources and quiet study areas on the second floor. "During the renovation process Lynn fought tooth and nail for much needed library services," Chris Porter, Dean of Learning Resources and Lynn's supervisor, said. "Lynn insisted on study spaces and priority for quiet, while still maintaining the entire collection that was boxed up and stored off site. She was the voice of the students."

Yet, the library renovation was more than just creating temporary learning spaces and moving computer labs. Lynn knew the library must adapt their space to serving multifaceted needs among both the academic and community based student audiences. Library Specialist, Faith Janney, who works closely with Lynn, added "During the renovation we had to weed out a third of our library collection. Lynn enlisted faculty members to assist in identifying books and spent countless hours identifying which books could go and which ones must be kept to form a significant core collection." Lynn was prominent in coordinating the efforts to ensure the updated library was relevant for today's 21st century learners. "Although she is very much a print advocate Lynn knows that today's students require the collaborative spaces and increased access to technology that necessitate reducing the size of the print collection and providing training to make full use of our growing electronic resources," Janney said.

3. How does the nominee make the college, community college, or university a better place?

It would be easy for Lynn to stay in the library sheltered by the books she loves so much, but Lynn has always been an active and involved member of the Virginia Western College community. During fall orientation Lynn provides presentations to new students on library resources and programs; at faculty in-service, Lynn presents orientations to new adjunct faculty and promotes opportunities for instructors to engage their students at the library. Additionally, Lynn keeps her teaching skills fine-tuned by instructing a Study Skills class each semester. She is capable, when needed, of moving seamlessly from administrative duties to talking with a class of students, asking all the questions librarians must ask to determine their assignment requirements, due dates and each student's personal choice of topic to fulfill the project goals.

Lynn embraces the vision of the college to be a "student-oriented center for lifelong learning" and is constantly seeking ways to have the library engage more with student life and learning on campus. She has been active on the book selection committee for

"Roanoke Valley Reads," a community wide reading experience that brings people together, and promotes reading on campus. As the Library Coordinator, Lynn always participates in this very public event and helps hand out copies of free books to students. On the weekends, she may be seen designing a special display section for a reference collection or creating colorful backings for book shelves. Lynn is an active member on numerous college committees, including the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, Curriculum Advisory Committee, Library Advisory Committee, and Ad Hoc Committee for Appointment's and Hearings. She also served as a member of the Mission, Vision & Values Task Force for the College's Strategic Plan and actively assisted the Institutional Effectiveness Office in the College's reaccreditation (SACS) process. Annually, Lynn actively participates in the staff giving campaign to support financially needy students through the Virginia Western Foundation, often done in memory of a colleague. For her efforts, Lynn was recognized by her peers for excellence in teaching and administration when she received the Outstanding Faculty Award for excellence in service in 2009.

However it is more than her achievement's that set her apart: Tim Healy, Former President of the New York Public Library, makes a statement that any good library director already knows, "The most important asset of any library goes home at night, the library staff." Giving her staff freedom to design and present information to students, Lynn welcomes their suggestions for improvement and initiates efforts to get the library services promoted in the College's Daily Bulletin. Through Lynn's encouragement, Library Specialist, Kalyca Schultz, began utilizing both Pinterest and Instagram as part of the library's social media outreach efforts. Although the library had already embraced (and was one of the first community colleges in Virginia to do so) online blogs, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter they were surprised to discover in May of 2013, that they were the first library in the Virginia Community College System (VWCC is one of 23 Community Colleges in Virginia) using Pinterest and Instagram. Brown Library was applauded for their efforts to utilize social media to promote new books, draw attention to specific collections and subject areas, publicize events, highlight special collections, and familiarize patrons with both the physical space of the library, library staff and its online resources.

4. How has the library, and the nominee in particular, had an impact on students and faculty and the teaching and learning process?

Like all community colleges Virginia Western serves a variety of students: of the over 12,800 students that attend the college almost half are low-income, 25% are first-generation students, one-third place into developmental remediation courses for math, reading and/or writing and 5% have disabilities. Of those that do make it through the first year of college only 54% return for year two. There are a multitude of barriers to higher education for the many low-income students in the Roanoke valley. Lynn Hurt with the support of her staff are leading an effort to provide outreach to traditional and distance students who previously have had little library interaction.

The effort begins with reaching out to community college faculty using a library infomercial at the annual fall in-service for all faculty and staff. The infomercial (now on

the Brown Library website) not only explains available library services but also gives an entertaining throwback reference to the Brady Bunch

(http://infoguides.virginiawestern.edu/facultyservices). Lynn has encouraged the library's reference staff to pursue outreach to faculty, with the goal of serving more students in the classroom setting using a variety of services and resources including the new "embedded" librarians program.

Through Lynn's leadership in 2014 Brown Library began offering the Embedded Librarian program, Dale Dulaney, Reference and Instruction Librarian states, "This outreach starts with the faculty who are encouraged to design collaborative research assignments. Librarians embed in classes through Blackboard and serve as teaching assistants by designing specialized resource websites for these classes, and producing video tutorials." Research on embedded librarians has shown that students who are helped by this service as part of their classes, are more likely to visit the library, ask for help and have improved literacy information skills.

The efforts of Lynn and her library staff have not gone unnoticed. A recent article (September, 2014) published in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice, entitled "Building Relationships through a Digital Branch Library: Finding the Community in Community College Library Websites" examined the ability of a digital branch library to engage users. Specifically, the researchers looked at a digital branch as going beyond the characteristics of merely a web site to create opportunities for interactivity, engagement, dialogue with users and so forth, so that the experience of "visiting" a digital branch would be similar to that of actually going to a library. Unknowingly Virginia Western was randomly selected from among 100 community college library web sites to be reviewed for this research project and was one of the highest ranked sites in the study, exhibiting many of the characteristics identified as critical to both digital libraries and relationship-building. Dr. Nora Bird, a researcher on this project from the School of Education Department of Library and Information Studies at the University of North Carolina At Greensboro, contacted Lynn with the results.

Libraries are more than bricks and mortar. Lynn Hurt has greatly impacted the teaching and learning process at Virginia Western by creating a strong library program which embraces digital technology that helps students perform better academically by providing a hub for learning, technology and community.

5. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the campus community? Bestselling authors Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner of "The Leadership Challenge" state, "Before you can lead others you have to lead yourself and believe that you can have a positive impact on others. You have to believe that your words can inspire and your actions can move others. You have to believe that what you do counts for something."

Lynn Hurt has demonstrated extraordinary leadership at Virginia Western because she understands what it means to make your life count, and have a good laugh along the way. From the time she was a little girl Lynn wanted to work in a library, she states, "I have

always loved libraries and wanted to be a librarian. It was a long and winding road getting to this goal; however, I finally reached my destination, and the trip was definitely worth it "

Lynn's first job at Virginia Western Community College was in the Admissions Office for four years, after that she worked in the Counseling Department as an advisor for another eight years but she never stopping hoping that she would one day work in the library. In early 2000 Lynn knew it was time to pursue her dream and began taking courses through the University of Tennessee Knoxville, to become a librarian. During her first semester taking library science classes the opportunity arose to transfer into the Library. She achieved her dream of becoming a librarian and graduated with a Master's in Information Science from the University of Tennessee in 2003.

Helping students, faculty, staff and community patrons, often using humor to put them at ease, is a trademark of her leadership. Laugher, smiles and service are important aspects to Lynn's everyday work ethic. For almost 15 years Lynn Hurt has been leading by example, Janney modestly states "She has a wonderful ability to relate to others." Customer service is also important; Lynn understands that when students seek help at the library it can be an important part of them achieving their learning goals. Perhaps most important, Lynn demonstrates leadership among her peers by saying "Thank you." Never one to rest on her laurels, Lynn takes time to check in with her staff frequently to ask about their day or see who she can help. Dulaney adds, "She inspires us to match her enthusiasm in our own work and to always seek ways to go beyond simply meeting expectations."

Today Brown Library is an active and vibrant place to learn, study and grow at Virginia Western. Students who have graduated often come back to say hello, and Lynn welcomes them with a broad smile. Lynn Hurt has made a significant impact at the College through her leadership and vision for the library as a "quality student experience." Lynn's warmth and positive attitude have made her a tireless advocate for library resources that promote student learning, information literacy and community building. Dr. Elizabeth Wilmer, Dean of Academic Affairs, explains the impact of Lynn's leadership by stating simply, "We are miles from where we were," and Lynn Hurt knows "The trip was worth it!"