

I Love My  
Librarian!  
2009 Award

**Nominations for Sol A. Gómez**

Branch Manager, Librarian II  
Pima County Public Library, Sam Lena-South Tucson Branch  
Tucson, Arizona

Nominator:

Ramon Valadez  
Tucson, Arizona

**1. How long have you known the nominee and how did you come to know him or her?**

I came to know Sol Gomez when he was a staff assistant for a fellow supervisor in 2002. We worked on the same floor but didn't have much interaction. Sol was very personable and driven. I was not surprised when he left his position to pursue a higher education degree. He graduated with his Masters of Library Science in 2004 and was quickly hired by the Pima County Library System. I also frequently see Sol and neighborhood and community events. He is very committed to making this community of Tucson, Arizona better.

In 2006, he became the Managing Library at Sam Lena South Tucson Library, which is in my district and an area to which I pay close attention. In the three previous years, the library had changed managers three times and the effective was negative on the library. This community relates best to people who attentive and invested in what is happening in their lives. The community is predominantly Spanish speaking (very little English) and historically underserved. This is one of the reasons why I am writing this nomination. Many of the patrons have told me wonderful things about how Mr. Gomez has helped them improve their computer skills, helped them look for jobs or helped them learn how to play chess. I wanted to be sure that Sol is able to get recognized for the great work he has done and continues to do.

**2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and others 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 research project or finding other information?**

The City of South Tucson is unique. Located just south of downtown Tucson, it is a one square mile within metropolitan Tucson. The city proudly reflects the slogan, "The Pueblo Within a City" by retaining the cultural background, language and beliefs of its people. The Sam Lena South Tucson branch is in the heart of the city, in the same complex with the City Council, Police and Fire Departments.

With Mr. Gomez's encouragement groups hold meetings in the building after hours and on weekends. I frequently visit that library and it is great to see the branch is bustling with activity and being the heartbeat of the community.

Mr. Gomez has a great rapport with his main client base, the teens. He has created numerous events and supported the continued involvement of teens in positive activities. He's helped to create a chess club (complete with volunteer mentors), a reading program, Top Chef South Tucson (through a collaboration with UA School of Information Resources and Library Sciences), increased their access to relevant media for this age group and simply asking them what they want, something few have ever done.

Mr. Gomez has a strong working relationship with the seniors of his community. The Pima Council on Aging Mature Worker's Program has an office in the library. Mr. Gomez worked to bring the Senior Community Service Employment program to South Tucson, and the program is getting national recognition.

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

Mr. Gomez has done much for this community. Most of the patrons speak only Spanish or very little English). Sol has helped them have confidence that they can do anything they set their minds to. He helped them improve their computer skills by working with Tecnológico de Monterrey. When Gómez took over a distance education program to train Spanish speakers to use computers, he realized that many students were dropping out. He enlisted UA honors students to help them and followed through with his own personal commitment to their success with frequent calls and coaching. He worked with UA honors students to create a Spanish-language computer course focused on job searching and résumé building. Students emerge with the skills to create a résumé and apply for jobs online; the honors students get service learning credits and improve their Spanish; and Gómez's branch meets important user needs.

Sol isn't afraid to try new things and as a result has had many successes. He is often working with individual patrons to assist them in locating information or a website they need. The library is a secure and safe place for patrons of this community to go to. It offers one of the only computer labs in South Tucson and is very busy. It is open to patrons everyday of the week.

**4. How does the nominee make the library a better place? Please be specific.**

Mr. Gomez is welcoming, personable but professional, knows the people he serves and most importantly listens to their needs and follows through. He is a truly giving person that is available to his community and is a mentor. Many teens can relate to him. He often tells patrons, "if I can do it, so can you".

This community is highly impoverished and has a higher population of homeless persons than the City of Tucson does. Several of the meal distribution sites, homeless shelters and community food bank are housed in or near South Tucson. The library is climate controlled so many homeless people gravitate to the branch.

Sol is respectful to all of the patrons and realizes the right to access for all. He is also keenly aware that many teens come to the library without their parents to supervise them. The branch is located across the street from a youth center, and in close proximity to an elementary school. This delicate balance of providing access and incurring all are safe is something that Mr. Gomez has mastered over the years. His confidence has encouraged others in his staff and other patrons. There is a sense of ownership of the library amongst its clientele and as a result, there is much learning and a few negative issues.

**5. How has the librarian made a difference in the community?**

In 2008, Mr. Gomez worked with the UA College of Nursing to find ways to improve literacy. Health literacy is a major issue nationwide and in the City of South Tucson . College of Nursing students conducted two community assessments; one for the general population and one focusing on youth ages 0-19. Although this was an assignment for the nursing students, the data compiled will be used to improve health literacy in the City of South Tucson . Each assessment was compiled into a report including current information about the City of South Tucson's physical environment, education, safety & transportation, politics & government, health & social services, communication, economics, and recreation; all which are tied to the importance of health and health literacy. This information has helped to form policies in South Tucson.

Sol Gomez's focus is the betterment of the community. He is engaged and caring, confident and compassionate. It is my great pleasure to nominate Sol for this award on behalf of myself and the patrons of South Tucson.