

I Love My Librarian!

2010 Award

Nominations for Ellen Dolan

Shrewsbury Public Library
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

Nominator:

Name withheld by request of nominator

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

Ellen is always ready with a smile and a friendly greeting. When the library is busy it is not unusual to see Ellen pitching in to help the circulation desk staff check out books, and always with friendly smile. Ellen has made herself available on evenings and weekends to help gather feedback from groups both large and small and to educate the public on the goals and needs of the Library.

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?

Ellen helped me a great deal when I was working with my younger son to improve his reading skills. I had a reading program book that recommended specific books and I was unable to find them on the shelves. Ellen helped me use the online book search to request the specific books through inter-library loan. It was wonderful to be able to get the books I needed when I needed them. Over the course of the summer we had read over 40 books and my son's reading improved a whole grade level! If it had not been for Ellen I would not have known about the online catalog and my son may have continued to struggle with his reading.

I now use the inter-library loan program for exploring many subjects that I find interesting.

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

Ellen has done a lot to communicate with the community; meeting with groups, providing tours through the library, speaking at town meeting, community television programming, and a community newsletter that is mailed to our homes. Ellen writes a column in the newsletter and I make a point to read that column every time. Ellen shares a bit of herself in her column and causes you to reflect on the community and the library in the

process. The newsletter was started by Ellen and is a wonderful communication vehicle for the many programs that the library offers. These programs have all been started and grown during Ellen's tenure.

Ellen is a true professional.

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

Ellen and the library have improved my life by opening my eyes to and providing a wide-range of services. In addition to the inter-library loan program, I use the library to access audio-books that I play on my mp3 player. This had provided me with an easy ability to consume many classics that I listen to when I garden and walk my dog. Many of these I would never have had time to sit down and read such as Ayn Rand's "The Fountainhead" or "Atlas Shrugged". By being able to get literature in the format you need, when you need it, allow people to expand their thinking.

Through the programming provided at the library I have attended interesting classes, such as Indian Cooking.

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

Ellen had created an environment that is friendly and helpful. Ellen has done a great deal to reach out and communicate with the public. The evidence of this is that Shrewsbury has some of the highest library traffic in the state. We are luckily to have Ellen and I believe she should be honored with this award.

Nominator:

Cathy Cooper
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Ellen is a self-directed Library Director who thinks "outside the box". She thinks ahead to the needs of future libraries. She is a driving force the town's future building addition. She has participated in library tours which show the need for the addition. She is involved in the state's regulations in grant process. She involved the community in many elite programs in the library. Many groups are served. Library usage has increased by hundreds of patrons. There is a Friends of the Library group which I have been in enrolled. 15 years ago the F of L numbered about 15 people and now numbers about 200 members. She is a understands how to increase usage and community awareness that libraries are not just about the books.

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?

I am on the steering committee to educate and get the voter out to the polls in order to support an new addition for the library. I am an elected town meeting member who supports the library for maintaining its hours and other financial issues. I have many interests: genealogy club, the national reading day, projects in business, read about parenting, self-help and novels. I use books on tape, dvds, music, computers, the meeting room. I have gone to the Memorial Day reception, and have taken out passes to family- oriented selected parks, and museums. She has an open door policy and is that kind of person who shared her knowledge and is a wonderful role model.

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

Ellen has increased community knowledge about the state library grant regulations. I feel that process has increased town officials and trustees skills in that arena. I am grateful to work with Ellen and I know that others feel the same, including town officials and the town manager as I talk to them about increasing the usage of the library. The name of the campaign for the new addition is "The Next Chapter" which means to me; the future of libraries as Ellen understands it. That is the model of multiple medias and community gathering. Ellen's model shows that libraries are the first place to understand our technology and brings people together.

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

Ellen has increase my knowledge about state regulations and now I have increased my skills in that arena. I am grateful to work with Ellen and I know that others feel the same, including town officials and the town manager as I talk to them about increasing the usage of the community library. She has been so positive in the ups and downs of the state grant program and has helped me be positive as well. I have increased my devotion and time to the library because of her.

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

Ellen hires highly skilled, knowable librarians who have can-do attitudes which promote the usage of the library for all ages. She has programs that promote usage by: providing the schools with media for classes and a library van which provides books to the nursing homes and other shut-ins. One of my favorite programs is summer reading. Students

volunteer to assist other students to find their summer reading books. Literacy programs meet at the Shrewsbury Library. Tax forms are provided there, the young adult sections has graphic novels, tots programs are promoted, and volunteers are help out the staff with shelving, etc. I love the library.

Nominator:

Katherine Colman
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

As the Director of the Shrewsbury Public Library, Ellen Dolan brings together an outstanding combination of talents. She has boundless energy, a contagious enthusiasm for the mission of libraries in our communities, and is beloved by all who know and work with her. I have watched her in action since she arrived at our town's library in February 2005, and her many accomplishments and undertakings during these difficult budget times have been remarkable.

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?

Libraries have always been important to me, but the value of libraries and the expanded importance they have within our communities is more apparent to me now than ever before. This greater understanding is due in large part to the outreach and educational efforts by the staff of our local library under Ms. Dolan's leadership. Ms. Dolan is a visionary who understands the need for libraries to evolve. She herself has been in the forefront of implementing changes, providing leadership by showing how libraries can better serve our communities, and garnering support from a broad range of groups within our community.

Our library is an extremely useful community benefit for me and since her arrival our librarian has implemented programs and services that increase the value to me and to our community. Some of the ways that I personally have been helped are as follows:

- Ellen Dolan carved out an area to designate as a "quiet reading room" that is a peaceful oasis in a very crowded, undersized library building. Reading in that room has become such a pleasure and great way to escape from the stresses in life – at least temporarily!
- Despite a very tight budget, the use of technology at our library is expanding. While the number of computers available for public use in the building is not great (because there isn't sufficient room and funding), our librarian arranged for free, high-quality Wi-Fi access for patrons throughout the building using a partnership arrangement with our local municipal utility company. Patrons with laptops can come and do research more easily. Also, having Wi-Fi available reduces the competition for the limited number of library computers designated for public use.
- Many online databases that would be either too expensive or simply not available to typical users can be accessed through the library online resources. New online resources are added as the technology evolves and needs change.
- While I do subscribe to several local newspapers, the library provides me with access to a variety of newspapers and periodicals that I could not possibly afford to purchase regularly on my own.

- Library programs are geared toward a variety of community needs and are responsive to the economic conditions. I have enjoyed many worthwhile programs sponsored by the library including musical concerts, a genealogy research club, local history presentations, and book discussions. Other programs offer help with tax preparation, computer use, job hunting, and even retirement planning. There was a fascinating series of workshops called “Tightwad Tips for Tough Times” that covered a wide range of money saving topics.

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

Our library is located in the center of our charming and historic New England town overlooking the town common and the old First Congregational Church. Under Ellen Dolan’s leadership the library is much more than just a physical presence in the center of town. In so many ways, it has become the very heart of our town as well. Ellen Dolan has created an environment that, despite the building’s many problems and small size, is popular with and heavily used by all segments of our community.

- The growing usage of our library is well documented and the statistics are posted at the library each month.
- Over 70% of our town’s residents have active library cards. It is a well-used facility and the number of users has grown significantly during Ms. Dolan’s time here.
- It’s a place that is welcoming to everyone and offers something for everyone – young, old, and in between.
- Ellen Dolan is involved in all aspects of the library but gives her staff freedom to implement new programs and ideas.
- She is highly regarded by her staff and it shows in the way that they do their jobs pleasantly and with enthusiasm.
- Quarterly, the library publishes a terrific newsletter (delivered to every household in town) that includes a page entitled “Letter from the Director” that is both interesting and informative. For example, Ellen sometimes uses that letter as a means of keeping town residents informed about the library building and our proposed building project. Other times she will use it as a place to tell a story about a meaningful encounter she has had with a child or adult patron at the library. The newsletter itself is fascinating to read and includes highlights of key activities or resources available to children, young adults, and even the older crowd.
- Some of the newer library programs are geared toward the current economic challenges that people in our community face (e.g., job hunting needs, penny pinching ideas, information sharing, support for school programming, online tutoring for students, displays highlighting health-related topics, inexpensive entertainment options such as museum passes, etc.).
- As times become more challenging from a budget perspective, community groups and businesses have aligned themselves with the library, either to help the library or to utilize library resources more themselves, nearly all of these changes stem from initiatives begun by Ellen Dolan.

- The use of volunteers has increased under her leadership as well, but she strikes a balance by not relying too heavily upon volunteers. Managing volunteers and their activities is still a drain on staffing resources.
- Since joining us in 2005, Ms. Dolan dealt with drastic budget cuts by introducing a private funding model to pay for Sunday hours. In order to keep the library open on Sundays during the winter, spring, and fall seasons, she came up with a “Sunday Sponsorship” program. It was a highly successful partnership involving local businesses, individuals, community groups, and even municipal groups (e.g., Shrewsbury Firefighters’ Association) joining together to sponsor one or more Sundays to keep our library open for more hours. Approximately 35 Sundays are now funded entirely by donations each year from these partners.
- Ellen has set an example for other directors of publically supported community-based programs in our town. Enlisting private partners is seen as a great way to continue quality programming formerly funded primarily by public taxpayer funds during better fiscal times.

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

In 2004, I retired at age 55 from the business world and immediately began to enjoy more time at my local library. I spent many great hours at the library doing the reading and research that I never had time to do while working and raising a family. The minute that Ellen Dolan arrived in February of 2005, I sensed a very different atmosphere. She is not the type of library director who stays hidden in her office! During busy times, she is at the circulation desk performing checking out duties along side of her staff. She makes it her business to get to know her patrons, solicits suggestions and advice from everyone (staff, patrons, community groups, town leaders, etc.), and finds out what works and what does not work at the library. Her style of managing places great emphasis upon collaboration.

In 2005 the library began a serious pursuit of a building renovation and expansion plan. The current structure (made up of a 1903 building, 1923 annex, and 1979 addition) was experiencing significant problems. Ellen Dolan recruited me (along with many others) to work as a volunteer on our library’s building campaign in May of 2006. Nobody can say no to Ellen – certainly not me anyway; she is one of the most endearing, hard-working people I know. Most of us who joined forces to work on the campaign to renovate and expand our library thought that it would be a short term endeavor of no more than 3 years. Now it is more than 5 years later and we have experienced some ups and downs – some of the “downs” are related to the changes in our country’s economy. A building campaign that we thought would be challenging began to look downright impossible at times. Not so for Ellen Dolan – who has been and continues to be an incredible motivator and leader in the effort. She perseveres and meets every obstacle thrown in our path with resolve and amazing creativity! Our prospects for a successful building campaign look much, much brighter now and we have every reason to believe that, under Ellen’s calm but determined leadership, our community will support and ultimately enjoy a more vibrant and functional community library. I am very excited to have the opportunity to help accomplish this goal. The experience has been both demanding and rewarding.

I have an even greater appreciation for the role of libraries in our lives because it has enriched mine so much and continues to do so.

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

Our librarian is masterful at managing her budget and accomplishing dynamic programming that is both worthwhile and cost effective. She has a knack for collaborating with others in our community to accomplish what often appear to be insurmountable goals and tasks. I am constantly amazed and in awe of her energy and her ability to bring about change and improve services in such a tough economic environment.

Currently, our library building is completely inadequate for the size of our population and has major problems with failing systems (all major mechanical systems need replacing). Additional challenges include:

- Deterioration of the building due to water infiltration (stemming primarily from a poorly designed addition that was built in 1979 with a flat-roof),
- Inadequate and nonflexible space for patrons, staff, and collections, and
- Significant handicap accessibility issues.

Despite these difficulties, our director and her staff manage to provide impressive services at the location. Because of the way that Ellen and her staff have responded to our community's library needs, many in town do not realize just how challenging that has really been! Those of us who use the library frequently and have worked behind the scenes as volunteers have had an opportunity to become more familiar with both the efforts of the library staff and the obstacles that prevent the services from being even better.

I urge the nomination review committee to give very strong consideration to Ellen Dolan for an award in the Public Library category. Ellen Dolan is the epitome of an exceptional librarian. In all my years of using many libraries, I can't think of anyone who could possibly be more deserving. She is an absolute gem and her accomplishments are truly noteworthy.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in an award nomination program for librarians.

Nominator:

Vanessa Hale
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

I have found Ellen Dolan to be one of the most dynamic and energetic professionals I have ever known, and I consider her a peer, a mentor and a friend. I am a manager in a neighboring municipality and often seek Ellen's advice on a variety of municipal and professional matters. She has a stellar reputation across Massachusetts and is widely respected in her field.

Ellen faces each day with an unlimited amount of enthusiasm – for her library, her staff, for the education she is able to provide to wide audiences and for the community she has enriched.

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?

I did visit the library often before Ellen assumed the helm, but through getting to know her and working with her, she has inspired me to get more involved in the library. In addition to joining the Friends of the Library, I have attended more programs that she has brought to my attention and enjoyed each and every one. Some of these have been outside of the public library, but they are all things that Ellen has had an interest in and found a way to relate them to the community as a whole. To make our library a better place.

She has the knowledge, skills and abilities to connect with so many of her patrons and draw them into the library. I can assure you, no patron is ever dissatisfied with what they have become involved with at the library. Quite the opposite – they keep coming back for more and bring their family and friends with them. She has targeted audiences that did not visit the library often and found programs to enrich their lives and quality of life in many cases. She is a superior librarian who has eloquence, panache, boundless knowledge on so many subjects and the ability to make a patron feel welcome, no matter their background, age or education level.

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

One of the most enjoyable and welcoming nights I have ever had while living in Shrewsbury was the Community Read night that Ellen organized [“The Ride of Paul Revere”]. It was unfortunately during a raw and rainy night, but Ellen never let that dampen her spirits and the event went on by flashlight and under canopy. It was a terrific tribute to the community and offered a way for every citizen to come out and show how much they love their library. She formed a committee to assist her, widely publicized the event and with the help of volunteers she guided the event which was under-written by corporate donations. The evening was attended by over 500 people despite the driving rain and wind that night!

It's a little thing, but there is a monument to Shrewsbury veterans at the corner of the plot of land where the library stands - a main intersection in downtown Shrewsbury. The monument was over-grown and hidden by shrubbery after years of lack of maintenance.

Ellen spearheaded this effort and asked the Friends of the Library to take on this worthy project. By clearing the debris from this corner, the library not only re-dedicated themselves to honoring these worthy veterans, but they also beautified the grounds around the library and brought new and fresh attention to what a centerpiece of the community this library is. The current library is the original town hall and is a historical piece of property. It is a unique place to honor those that came before us, to remember what they thought and planned for and to carry forth into new generations the values that the community was founded for those many years ago.

Ellen has had to make some difficult financial decisions when the Town was ready to slash her funding. She made the elected and appointed boards believe that the library is not a "luxury" as some wish to declare it. It is and will remain an essential service, in the downturned economy and beyond. She chose carefully and went beyond the normal means to preserve her staff and let few people suffer. It can be a difficult budget process when municipal departments are pitted against one another for dollars. Shrewsbury is not like that. Ellen has been instrumental in assisting other departments when she can. Whether it be the seniors, the school aged children or the disenfranchised. They are all her constituents. We hope we are on the other side of that crisis now. One thing we know is that our library has persevered, thanks in great part to Ellen Dolan.

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

There are the obvious things that come to mind, like the classes that are offered, the adult service programs that occur throughout the year, and the book groups and social events that bring folks like myself into the library.

I have always been a frequent user and supporter of the library, from the time my parent's first brought me to my hometown library. Since I have a career in government that precludes me from being politically active in the community, the committee work and projects I have been able to help with at the library have given me a chance to "give back." Ellen has been very mindful of the limited ways in which I could contribute. She has always been considerate to think of me and how I can help out the library in a way that makes me comfortable. I have loved all the ways in which I can contribute to my library, since I cannot run for the elected Board of Library Trustees. It has made me feel like I am really helping my community and has been so beneficial, on both sides I think.

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

Ellen sets the tone at the library and it is one that is welcoming, warm, diversified, energetic and wide open to new ideas and approaches. She has taken a library that was functional and popular and transformed it into a current day "community center" even though she did not have the space, the funding or the facility that it requires. She has made a teen room that did not really exist before, she has upgraded space for her staff that they deserved, she has been subjected to a less than par public facility and not complained, she has secured funding through grants and other resources to add programs, she has tripled the amount of volunteers to aid her in her efforts since she has not been able to increase her staff, she has attended meeting after meeting at night when the library is closed to support her staff and programs when she had more pressing concerns at home. There could not be a more dedicated professional in the Town of Shrewsbury or beyond. She has been ruthless in her determination to renovate and expand the library. It has been a very long process, but Ellen has given it every ounce of determination she has. She is not a native of Shrewsbury and has worked

here a little less than ten years. She came into this position and took hold of this project and never looked back. You would never know this library has not been in her blood for her whole life. She has made herself part of this community every day and we are the better ones for it. She has promoted this library to every user group and that has confirmed what we all thought – that this library is one of the busiest and most successful in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Nominator

Dorothy Perkins

Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Ellen Dolan's exceptional skills of organization, leadership and personal relations set her apart from other in similar positions. When Ellen was appointed our new librarian, the town was embarking on a new project of updating the building. Her leadership in this endeavor has given us the opportunity of success in these difficult financial times.

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?

I have always been an avid reader and, therefore, a frequent visitor to a town library. After Ellen came to the Shrewsbury Library it was evident that there was a change in the atmosphere: all the employees there are obviously pleased with their positions. Never does there seem to be an aura of discontent – most unusual in my experience. Each of the department heads has been given the authority to lead that area without undue supervision; therefore, each has improved while still being a part of the whole. And all, including Ellen, do pitch in to assist wherever needed.

As I have been fortunate enough to have worked with Ellen on several committees dealing with both Friends of the Library presentations and with fund raising for the renovation, I have seen her leadership skills at work. She is always open to new ideas while also being prepared with her own suggestions. And, because of her professional approach, these committees have attracted excellent community leaders who have the abilities to make the project move forward.

It goes without saying, of course, that Ms. Dolan's background has prepared her in all the library skills needed to direct a library.

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

In a community of well over 30,000, there are bound to be naysayers on any expensive project. Because Ellen is so well spoken, knowledgeable and pleasant in her presentations to Selectmen, Town Meeting representatives and the Finance Committee, there has been a decided turn toward acceptance of the planned renovation of the library. With all the twists and turns of the possible state grant, Ellen has remained positive and ready to attack whatever comes our way.

I have also seen Ellen participating in other activities in the town. For instance, each year Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services, a department working with troubled young people, has a large fund raising event in which Ellen takes part. Since she does not reside in Shrewsbury, this donation of her time seems to me to be above and beyond what might be expected of the town's librarian.

Another facet of her position is staffing. Shrewsbury, along most towns nationwide, is experiencing financial short falls. Thus, Ellen has been forced to lay off employees while still maintaining the library's services. Although those affected have been disappointed, they seem to all believe they were treated fairly and the work at the library goes on albeit reduced hours. In such ways, Ellen has worked with the town's governing bodies well.

Of course, the successful completion of an expanded library and library services will make a very positive difference in Shrewsbury. When approved, it will certainly be proof of Ellen's abilities.

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

A well-run library is a blessing to all who partake of its services. It serves as a source of learning and entertainment. Shrewsbury's library is the perfect example of how one should operate: the books, tapes, magazines, and all are well organized and therefore easy to find. The computers give access to many programs most individuals are not able to have at their homes, plus the staff is very knowledgeable and helpful. Programs for the very young, the teens, and adults are available and well subscribed. Although space for community programs is limited, the staff is ready to make what room is available work for various events. As a library user, this excellence is a great help to me.

I also know that I have learned a great deal while serving on the committees preparing the way to raising funds for the current project. I have marveled at Ellen's ability to bring the best out of participants. Watching a 'pro' is always a benefit!

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

In several ways the library has become a better place since the arrival of Ellen Dolan:

- Most importantly, it is the improved atmosphere. All who work with her are congenial and helpful, not only to visitors but also to one another. The busy time just before opening has all hands (including Ellen's) ready to assist. All queries, either by phone or in person, are responded to respectfully and answered as well as can be expected.
- It is the rearrangement of materials in many areas that has made it easier to find what is needed.
- It is the recognition of the possibilities of new technology as it becomes available that is keeping the Shrewsbury Library up to date and ready for new challenges.
- It is in the acceptance of volunteer help with the reassurance to regular employees that they are valuable and not being replaced.

There is no doubt that Ellen has made our library the true center of the town

Nominator

Name withheld by request of nominator

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

Ellen Dolan is very committed to working with community members of all ages & walks of life. She maintains a very positive outlook on the future of our Library despite the most challenging fiscal environment our town is facing.

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?

Ellen is the ultimate professional and uses her experience and creativity to stretch the budget, to find support from new sources and to motivate her staff at Shrewsbury Public Library. She is very good at suggesting ways for volunteers to get involved. Ellen's optimism and creative ideas, along with her proven understanding of how to make our library a welcoming place, motivated me and my husband to get involved, to provide funds to keep the library open on Sunday afternoon and to support the upcoming capital project.

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

Ellen has always listened to all voices and stayed true to her vision for the future of Shrewsbury Public Library while respectfully honoring its 100+ years of history.

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

I've been a lifelong lover of libraries and have found Shrewsbury Public Library to be welcoming, with enthusiastic staff and good resources. I attribute this, in some part, to our Director, Ellen Dolan.

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

Again, Ellen is professional and leads her staff to develop programs for many different groups of people in Shrewsbury, ranging from young children to teens, to senior citizens. The library is always busy and has "something for everyone", thanks to Ellen's leadership. Moreover, Ellen is warm & friendly and open to chat with or listen to patrons.

Nominator

Mark Adler

Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Ms. Dolan has dramatically improved our town's library from being a mere repository into a vital resource and a community center. Through this transformation our town is itself improved. The reputation of our town has grown as visitors from neighboring municipalities and from further away have remarked on how our little library is so well managed, the staff is so friendly, and the collection is so extensive.

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?

Ms. Dolan has encouraged a welcoming atmosphere when visitors first arrive through the doors. A first visit to a public library can often be a daunting initiation to a brutalist government depository. Ms. Dolan, however, has trained her staff to welcome visitors. I am routinely welcomed with a smile and a "hello" every time I enter. When I have had trouble finding a book, staff members have gladly left their posts and brought me to the right shelf, all along the way explaining to me how to find my way through the library.

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

Ms. Dolan has made the library a resource for the public. With the economic downturn, the library introduced a job resource center with a resumé-building service and computer training classes. When government budgets were strained, Ms. Dolan filled funding gaps with sponsorships from local businesses and kind-hearted patrons without compromising the free public access to our library. Community events are now based at the Shrewsbury Public Library.

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

Ms. Dolan has made the library the most welcoming public resource in the town. My wife, son, and I, now routinely go to the Library when we're looking for something to do. It's a nice place to go read a book, play a quiet children's game, or browse the periodicals. Sometimes we bring our own books to the library to read them in the Reading Room.

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

Even with her managerial obligations, Ms. Dolan frequently moves around the library personally welcoming patrons and actively offering her assistance to guests looking for a book. She routinely helps her staff at circulation and technical services often filling in when there's a surge in patronage. The Shrewsbury Public Library's circulation has soared in the years since she started as Director.

Nominator

Debbie and John Lebeaux
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Ellen Dolan provides innovative, high quality library services to a community of 33,000 in a fiscal environment in which year after year her budget is under extreme pressure. At the same time she maintains morale and enthusiasm within her staff in spite of reductions to man-hours. Ellen is a leader and a collaborator. She inspires our community to work together to develop ideas and projects that enhance our daily lives and community spirit. Her sense of humor, quiet strength, determination, and ability to communicate honestly and directly are just some of her qualities which set her apart.

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?

The library is a second home for me and my family. Mrs. Dolan has made the library a vibrant place. She has encouraged thought of how the library can be used to get people to talk to each other about current issues and enjoy the experience of learning. She has initiated The Big Read which has brought generations together. The quarterly newsletter is filled with a range of activities. I've attended the foreign film series, which generated a lot of discussion which generated discussion about the art and the power of film.

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

Ellen has continually offered programs to increase community awareness in the operation of the public library: The Big Read, National Library Week, an effort to make an application to the Guinness Book, active teen program, cable TV program, Facebook page, etc.

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

Our responses to each question indicate how Ellen's work improved quality of life.

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

As a local elected official, I have marvelled at Ellen's ability to keep the library a thriving active institution with increasing numbers of customer transactions while our local government reluctantly reduces funding to it.

Nominator

Sharon Yager

Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Ellen should win this award because she is a devoted individual who truly involves every aspect of the Town's functions and various populations to expand utilization of the library. As a fellow Department Head, I see first hand the thoughtful reports Ellen prepares for the monthly Department Head meetings to spread the word about library utilization, upcoming programs and possible partnerships. She has hosted some of the meetings at the library to get each department head, from the head of the Sewer and Water Department to the Highway Superintendent involved and knowledgeable about what the Shrewsbury Library has to offer.

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?

In the time we have worked together, Ellen has applied for two ambitious "Big Read" grants that involved the town and numerous departments on a vary large scale. Through working together on the Big Reads, we were able to offer exciting literature-related events to the community, many of them taking place here at the Senior Center. I know these would not have been able to take place if our department had tried to arrange them independently. These were well received by the community and created positive experiences for all involved.

Also, by bringing samples of audio books and other innovative materials to Department head meetings, Ellen was able to show me and the other Department Heads that no matter how busy we were, there was a way to fit literature into our lives, and she was right!

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

As the Council on Aging Director, I work directly with the senior citizen residents in town who are 60 and older. Most of these people love to read, are lonely or have extra time on their hands due to being retired, widowed, or dealing with a chronic illness. As the town's librarian, Ellen has made sure that library programs are accessible to seniors, often offering programs here at the Senior Center so that people don't just have to go to the Library to utilize the benefits of the library.

She has various equipment and options at the Library for those with visual impairments and those who need large print or audio books. She has a Library Outreach van that visits the homebound and brings books and materials the residents want directly to their homes. She runs wonderful programs that engage people of all ages, but always includes an angle that older residents may find interesting. With any special event that the Library plans, Ellen consults with me to brainstorm on how the program can be more user-friendly to the seniors and how to increase their participation.

Some of the older patrons of the Library are troubled. Due to the home-like, welcoming atmosphere that Ellen and her staff maintain at the library, no seniors are turned away, even though their issues may make them difficult patrons. She has dealt with seniors who are depressed, have dementia, or have more serious mental illnesses that may

even be disruptive to her staff at times. Ellen goes above and beyond to help the resident, making referrals to our Outreach and TRIAD programs, which can make further referrals and help the elder get the mental or other health services they need. I think by working together as a team, I would even go so far as to say that Ellen has helped save the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents through her careful observations and her gentle interventions, always showing sensitivity to the elder's situation.

Through her Friends of the Library group, she has been able to provide funding so that we are able to give the Library two pages of our Senior Edition Newsletter quarterly to further publicize Senior events and we collaborate on the vans that we use for senior transportation to provide a library shuttle for residents. She is wonderful to work with as a fellow department head, and I am thrilled to know the population I serve through my position is well served in the community of Shrewsbury because of Ellen's ability to see a resident as a whole, not just a library patron. Her vision and insight into making the services for the senior citizens as varied, enriching and rewarding as possible when it comes to services and programs offered through the town's library is something our department is very appreciative of.

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

For me personally, the library improved the quality of my life because I began to utilize the Library on-line and during my lunch breaks. I would not have been aware of these services if Ellen hadn't reached out through the Department Head meetings to help illustrate how the Library could help. I was able to borrow music and movies I enjoyed, listen to motivational tapes and CDs and work related books that related to challenges I wanted to overcome in the work place.

Ellen herself has improved my life by proving to be a true friend and colleague I can count on. When budgets are tight or budget planning is become grueling, Ellen arranges lunch dates for departments to get together to brainstorm on budgets, fundraising and other ideas to stay positive when the stress is building for everyone. Her enthusiasm and positive attitude is infectious and has helped me when I was most stressed.

I found that I could rely on Ellen for assistance in any project, not just one that was related to the library, but anything that had to do with improving the services, programs and activities that our community offers to the residents of Shrewsbury.

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

Ellen has made the library a better place by making the library welcome to everyone, whether the residents are children, elders, working parents and are employees of the town. She truly strives to make the library available to serve the patrons, not the other way around. She has worked hard to overcome budget obstacles to come up with creative ways to make the library available on nights and weekends so that every resident can access the library, regardless of where they work and what their schedules may be like.

By staying up with the latest technology, grants, and partnerships, Ellen is always working on new ideas to improve the library, improve its offerings and improve the experience the residents have when utilizing the library's services. This makes the library a better place for new residents, long-time residents, and allows the library to continue to be there for the library even as the needs of the residents change.

Most of all, Ellen is facing an uphill battle in the quest for improving the physical structure of the Shrewsbury Library. However, due to her creativity and endurance, I have no doubt she'll succeed in making this town dream a reality. Updating and expanding the

library will create a legacy for the residents for as long as perhaps the next century to come, and it will be an honor to have it happen under her leadership of the Ellen Dolan.

Nominator

Errol and Joan Ethier
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Ellen is an unusually effective leader, collaborator and advocate for the library in our community. More than just being the director of the library and overseeing its overall operation, she is extremely effective in communicating the services and needs of the library throughout the community, across all constituencies, and involving the entire community in the library. She achieves this in several ways which will be outlined more specifically in the responses below.

We have been involved with libraries and librarians throughout our lifetime and have been exceptionally impressed with the enthusiasm and advocacy that Ellen brings to her leadership.

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?

The two of us submitting this nomination are and have been elected town officials in our community for many years. We are both elected town meeting representatives (our town's legislature consisting of 200+ elected representatives, proportionately representing a population of about 35,000). One of us (Joan) was formerly an elected member and chair person of the town's school committee for several years. Our responses to this questionnaire are going to be from the wider perspective of elected town officials concerned about the welfare of and quality of life in our community rather than personal perspectives (which this question primarily addresses). We expect that others from our community will address the personal perspectives of this question. Combining the personal and community perspectives should provide a total picture of why Ellen makes the library a positive experience.

As our responses to the questions below will indicate, Ellen has and continues to make the library a positive experience for the entire community across many types of constituencies and age levels. She has been singularly effective in creating a library that has maintained and even increased levels of service and for which the number of individuals using the library has majorly increased – all in a period of time when financial resources available to the community have been dwindling. One could reasonably expect a librarian to look at this situation and determine that the proper approach is to cut back on services, let alone consider expansion of services and facilities. But that's not Ellen – she is no quiet or demure librarian. She has led the community, working with the Library Trustees (the governing board of the library), to recognize the value of the library as a key contributor to and bellwether of the community's quality of life. She has been a key part of and effective spokesperson for maintaining and even expanding services and facilities. Given her effective advocacy for the library, our community is now moving forward on a major project to expand the library facilities and make the library an even more effective part of our community – all the more significant given the current economic times.

Ellen, assisted by the Library Trustees, has made several presentations to the various town elected and appointed boards over the last many years, advocating for library

services and an expansion of the library facilities. In all cases she has won near unanimous support for library services and expansion. This is no easy feat, especially with the 200+ members of the town meeting where there can be at times wide divergence of views.

Now one could expect a resident of our community to take such pride in and make such a positive impact on the community – but Ellen resides in a different nearby community. All of Ellen’s commitment and advocacy, in spite of not residing in our community, speaks very highly of her positive impact on our community.

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

In order to really understand Ellen’s exceptional effectiveness, one needs to look at the larger community and the ways that Ellen has significantly rallied the community (and most especially the town meeting, our town’s legislature), around the library.

Some of the specific ways that Ellen has achieved this are as follows:

- Ellen has emphasized to the community the fact that the library is an integral part of the total educational and cultural experience of our community and contributes to the community’s overall quality of life. More than just nice sounding sentiments, Ellen has used this quality of life argument to convince the town’s elected and appointed officials (including the board of selectmen, the finance committee, some 200+ elected town meeting representatives, and the library trustees) that the library is deserving of appropriate funding even in poor economic times and with very limited municipal financial resources. In a very exceptional circumstance, the town’s officials increased the proposed budget of the library to make sure that vital library services were maintained even at the expense of other parts of the municipal budget. As one can imagine this was no small task. When a municipality has limited resources it must prioritize the services it can afford to provide to the community. In these circumstances it is very easy for a library to be viewed as an optional part of the community: nice to have when economic times are good, but the first to go on the chopping block when economic times are bad (as they are now). Ellen, with the assistance and support of the Library Trustees, has been a key influence in the way that the town has rallied around the financial support of the library.
- As noted above Ellen has involved many constituencies in the community to provide support for the library. An example of one such constituency has been the community’s local businesses. In order to provide additional Sunday library services, Ellen has enlisted businesses to provide funding for these Sunday services. Ellen makes sure that this business support is widely acknowledged with each supporting business receiving public recognition (wonderful PR for the businesses). As elected town representatives concerned about making financial ends meet with limited resources, we appreciate the creative ways utilized by Ellen to make sure that funding for library services are adding to the funding provided by town tax revenues.
- Our library building is very inadequate for the size of our community and the high level of services the library provides. Finding appropriate space for all of the services is now nearly impossible. We are using closets and other inadequate spaces to provide services. Ellen, working with the Library Trustees, has led the effort within the community to significantly expand the library facilities and provide appropriate spaces for both current and future library needs. One could easily argue that the present poor economic time is not the time to pursue such an expansion of the library. It could be easily argued that the community’s limited resources should be used for other purposes. But because of Ellen, along with the Library Trustees, the case has been made to the

community and the elected officials to support the expansion of our library. While this process involves funding in many stages, the town's elected officials and boards have overwhelmingly supported (provided funding for) each stage of the planning process currently occurring. The state's library commission, recognizing the need and enthusiasm of the community for its library, even granted the town several millions of dollars to assist in the funding of an expanded library facility. All of this is due in a large part to Ellen's leadership.

- Ellen continually uses the media in a masterly way in our community, including traditional newspapers, the senior citizens newsletter, the library newsletter and most especially local access cable TV on which the library provides a variety of programming. She effectively uses all these communication vehicles to promote the services and needs of the library throughout the community. This significant communication process is one key factor that has led to the widespread use and support of the library, all noted above.

- Ellen values and promotes library collaboration, both in and out of our community. Within our community she works with the schools, senior center and other groups to offer library services, ranging in scope from providing, in a welcoming manner, study and research space for students when school facilities are not available to programs and materials of interest to our senior citizens. She enthusiastically promotes the use of inter-library resources (sharing of resources among communities) which makes our community one of the highest users of such services. On a daily basis we have one of the largest amounts of books and materials coming into and going out of our library.

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

Ellen has been effective in using the library to maintain and improve the community's quality of life. In these poor economic times the library's services have been more heavily used by the community at large, seeking alternative means of education, entertainment and even employment assistance. Ellen has made sure that the library's services have been adjusted to provide the services that have been needed by the community for these economic times. As should be evident by now, the community's response to funding the library in large part has been recognition of the importance of the library to the community's quality of life. This has been one of Ellen's most significant achievements.

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

As elected representatives of our community, we are concerned about maintaining and, if possible, improving the quality of services offered to the community across all of the town's departments and organizations – all in a time of decreasing financial resources. Part of making any department a better operation are the ways in which the employees of that department offer the services to the public and the support offered to the employees by the department head. This is one area in which Ellen has specifically excelled: as the library's department head she effectively empowers, enables and motivates the library staff in providing the wide range of services offered by the library. This has not been an easy task in these tight economic times. Ellen has been faced with the financial necessity of turning some full-time positions into part-time positions (with reduced benefits) and still keeping the staff motivated to provide the same exceptional services to the community. She has achieved this goal. The level of services and support offered by the library's staff is very high – all making the library one of the friendliest places to visit in our community.

As part of making the library more effective (a better place), Ellen is currently looking at employing additional technology to the operation of the library in many areas. Specifically, to reduce the mundane but necessary tasks of checking books and other materials in and out of the library, Ellen is spearheading an effort to use new RFI technologies in this process which will eliminate much of this mundane work and free staff to offer even higher levels of library services to the community.

Nominator

James Colman
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Ellen Dolan is one of the most dedicated library professionals I have ever met. Aside from being extremely competent, she demonstrates on a daily basis her belief that library patrons and the public at large are her primary responsibility. She believes that excellent customer service is a top priority and manages to provide amazing library services in a facility that is inadequate and far too small for the population served.

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?

This nomination is written from my perspective as vice president of the Friends of the Shrewsbury Public Library and is representative of the thinking of many Friends members.

Within a short time after Ellen joined the library as Director, she came up with plans to:

- Re-energize the Friends of the Shrewsbury Public Library and the Library Board of Trustees,
- Develop and promote more outreach programs for all segments of the town,
- Collaborate with other town departments to provide innovative programs,
- Better utilize the support of the Friends group in creative, innovative ways, and
- Make the library a more welcoming place for patrons in general. She began by instructing her staff to park as far away from the entrance as possible to make it easier for patrons to enter the library – a small but meaningful change right at the beginning of her tenure.

Her many changes were noticed by patrons as evidenced by the numerous comments Friends members have heard from library users. Also, we believe that Ellen's changes have sparked an increased awareness about library services throughout the community. The library utilization statistics published monthly showing a steady increase in visits to the library and the increased circulation of materials seem to support that theory as well. Her impact has been overwhelmingly positive.

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

The past several years have been difficult from a budget perspective for the library and all town departments. To maintain state certification (and retain related state funding), libraries must stay open for a certain minimum number of hours each week. Since cuts to the budget meant reducing the number of hours that the library would be open and jeopardizing the library's certification, Ellen developed a program of private funding to pay for opening the library on Sundays. It was a partnership that she created with town

businesses, individuals, and even the fire department. Each contributed an amount equal to the cost of funding one or more Sunday openings. For the past 4 or 5 years she has successfully garnered the support of enough partners to completely fund all of the fall, winter, and spring Sunday hours at the library.

With her encouragement, Ellen's staff has developed outreach programs for every segment of Shrewsbury's population. Activities for babies, toddlers, school-aged children, young adults, stay-at-home parents, older adults, and the like have all grown during Ellen's time at the Shrewsbury library. When one looks at the paltry budget allocated for library services, it is fairly easy to see that residents receive excellent value for those dollars.

As members of the Friends organization, we are asked to provide financial support (and in some cases volunteer support) to enable many of these new initiatives to begin. In an effort to understand and explore new technologies, she encouraged the Friends to fund the purchase of some electronic readers (e.g., Kindle, Nook, etc.), so that she could experiment with them in a library setting and study ways to offer these options to patrons. She is enthusiastic (and forward thinking) when it comes to exploring new tools and technologies.

Ellen's passion for her work is evident. By collaborating with the town recreation director, she combined a story book adventure with a walking trail in town. In cooperation with the senior center director, she shared equipment and ideas for a number of terrific programs at both locations. With the help of our town's municipal utility company, she put on a hugely popular community-wide group reading event on a rainy, windy fall night – complete with specialized LED lighting, people-powered flashlights (donated), and colonial fife and drum company for musical entertainment. It was a huge success despite the weather!

A recent comment made by Ron Alarie, who just retired as our town's building inspector and health department director, sums up how many town department heads view Ellen. Ron Alarie said, "...despite the severe budget cuts that the library experienced during the last two budget cycles (especially the reduction of many of the full-time staff positions to less than half-time), Ellen always remained confident and positive in her demeanor. I was always impressed with her capability in maintaining harmony and creating a consensus between the varied groups she attends to during these troubled fiscal times, especially when you consider all of the additional work she was performing with respect to the library expansion planning and grant submittals. I believe those attributes are testimony to her leadership and management skills and her dedication to the value of public libraries."

Melanie Petrucci, president of one of our local civic organizations, reinforces what we have said about Ellen's contributions to our community with this comment: "Shrewsbury is very fortunate to have Ellen Dolan as Director of the Shrewsbury Public Library. As President of the Shrewsbury Social Club I speak with great conviction that Ms. Dolan should be honored in the Carnegie/NY Times 2010 'I Love my Librarian' award. Ellen has worked tirelessly to come up with innovative ways for our Library to get more with less funding and has turned our Library into a true community center where all segments of Shrewsbury benefit. At a time when Libraries are closing in our state, she is going out into the community to foster relationships with business, community groups and individuals to help keep the Library open on Sundays through the Sunday Sponsorship

Program and I am pleased that the Shrewsbury Social Club is able to provide the funding for the Library to remain open on a specific Sunday. Under Ms. Dolan's leadership, she has partnered with schools to serve as a resource for learning materials as well as with local civic and cultural groups by providing meeting space. On a more personal level, this past summer a new program at the Library was created where student volunteers were recruited to help other students find their summer reading books and my daughter took full advantage and signed up. Not only was my daughter able to help her peers but she gained confidence in herself as a result. Please give Ms. Ellen Dolan serious consideration as you select your 2010 'I Love My Librarian' Award."

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

Members of the Friends of the Library tend to be regular users of library services. As with most people, members' lives are busy with their own activities and responsibilities. Being an active member of the Friends, however, enables people to be more deeply involved in their town. They are able to assist a town department in need of their help, to go beyond themselves and their own neighborhood to doing something bigger and more significant than themselves. Ellen Dolan is a constant supporter of the Friends and a person who always seeks to involve as many people as possible in the activities of the library. There is no question – the quality of life in Shrewsbury is enhanced greatly by the library services available here.

My own personal experience with Ellen and our library has led me to realize that I could never live in a town without access to a vibrant, innovative, captivating library. I see it as absolutely essential to my well being and that of my family. Clearly, others share my view.

Here is a comment from Debra Mooney who (along with being a "Friend") is a parent, volunteer, and building campaign professional in our community. Debra has this to offer about Ellen:

"Ellen Dolan, of the Shrewsbury Public Library, is not only an exceptional librarian, but she is also an amazing person. She is the epitome of professional, yet exudes warmth and a kind spirit that touch all those around her. As a mother, I sincerely appreciate the way she makes my daughters feel as if they are the most important children to ever enter the Shrewsbury Public Library. Even with more than 1,000 visitors a day, she is never too busy to stop and ask them about their books, their day or to just give them a smile.

As a volunteer, I appreciate her understanding of our library as the heart of our community. She runs a great library program and shows an unwavering dedication to the future of our library. Despite huge infrastructure challenges, our library is always clean, well run and welcoming.

As campaign counsel, I could not ask for a more extraordinary client. I'm really not kidding when I suggest that I would follow her into fire. She simply is that kind of inspiring leader. She is enormously talented. She can explain the intricacies of bond financing and construction schedules to the most skeptical of prospect and make it all seem so simple. She is equally effective speaking to a boardroom full of CEOs as she is at a senior citizen tea.

Ellen is an irreplaceable blend of intelligence, experience, enthusiasm and warmth. We are so very fortunate to have her in Shrewsbury. We will one day have a beautiful new

library in the heart of our community, and it will be because Ellen Dolan has made that heart beat.“

From Bridget Mooney, age 7:

“I love Ms. Dolan because she likes books and she makes me feel special. I love to go to the library and see her.”

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

Ellen is always a cheerful and upbeat person. She has a welcoming attitude herself and has passed that on to her staff, even when faced with staffing cuts. She takes a hands-on approach to her work at the library while still managing the bureaucratic aspects of her position very effectively. During busy times, she is assisting at the circulation desk, warmly greeting patrons. Ellen was a tireless worker at each of the library grounds clean-up days sponsored by the Friends. On several occasions Ellen sought and received assistance from the Friends to acknowledge the good work done by her staff. She understands the value of praising and recognizing staff particularly in tight budget times.

In summary, this nominee is a shining example of everything that a library professional should be and it would give the library users in our town great pleasure to see her recognized with this award. She truly is a remarkable librarian and we hope that, after reviewing our nomination, you agree.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Nominator

Name withheld by request of nominator

Ellen Dolan

Shrewsbury Public Library
Shrewsbury, Massachusetts

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

Several years ago, Ellen Dolan was named Director of the Shrewsbury Public Library. She immediately started revitalizing the library, bringing a sense of excitement to the library staff, to its patrons, and to the entire town. Shrewsbury is extremely fortunate to have her.

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?

I have always had a love for books and an appreciation of libraries. However, programs like "The Big Read" that Ellen Dolan has initiated have expanded my reading interests.

Patrons quickly learn the names of the library staff, and the staff in turn learns the interests of patrons and makes suggestions.

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

It is impossible to list Ellen Dolan's many accomplishments during a few short years! She is always looking for ways to expand library services and bring people to the library for information, education and enjoyment.

Communication has never been better. Attractive and readable flyers are mailed to the entire town periodically and local newspapers regularly carry library news and announcements.

She has developed excellent coordination with the school department. Among the programs she has developed are after school workshops for latchkey children, online help with homework, contests, and entertainment.

Ellen Dolan has not only brought new life to the library, she has brought new life to our entire community!

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

I am one of many adults who recently learned new computer and electronic skills through the library. Ellen and her entire staff are always available to patiently guide patrons who need specific help using a computer for the first time, using the online catalog, or using many other online resources. They have personally taught me how to connect my old laptop to WiFi, how to set up eBay and PayPal accounts, and how to use Ancestry.com and other library genealogical resources. Ellen personally guided me through some problems with Kindle.

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

Library usage and circulation are at an all-time high.

Ellen Dolan is constantly looking for new services that the library can offer. She studies current library trends and listens to ideas from her staff and from the community.

Programs for all ages have been expanded or initiated. Classes start with babies, followed by story hours for toddlers, followed by programs for school children and teens. The list of adult programs is too long to enumerate, but includes conversation in world languages, ESL, hobby presentations, book groups, and computer classes. When patrons are no longer able to come to the library, an excellent outreach program brings the library to them.

It is obvious that the entire library staff enjoys working with Ellen. She brings out the best in each staff member, and helps each expand his/her own capabilities. She is modest about her own accomplishments, always giving credit to those around her. As a result, the staff has become even more helpful and friendly.

Ellen inherited a library building that is sadly in need of repairs and expansion. From the beginning, she knew that she would be expected to oversee library expansion and a capital campaign. She immediately started work on building plans and started reaching out to key people in the community for help in fundraising. She now has a devoted and excited following who share her vision of a library that will meet the needs of Shrewsbury for many years to come. These plans not only include more space for our growing population; they are also sufficiently versatile to accommodate the changing role of libraries. Ellen appreciates the efforts of all, with both public recognition and handwritten notes of thanks. Everyone working on the expansion campaign is kept informed of each new development. As in every building plan, there are sometimes setbacks. Ellen turns these setbacks into opportunities and never allows the public to become discouraged.