



The New York Times
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I Love My Librarian!

2008 Award

Nomination for Linda Allen

Libraries Director
Pasco County Library System
Hudson, Florida

Nominator:

Loriane Cors
Hudson, Florida

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

Linda Allen began her librarian career with the Pasco County Library System in 1988, as a Libraries Manager, when voters approved a referendum to fund a County Library System. Ms. Allen installed the County Library Automation Services System and launched the County Library webpage, which included links to local and worldwide information, making the Internet more accessible to the citizens of Pasco County. She was instrumental in pioneering the County's leap into new computer technology as well as providing training and information to county employees and the general public. In 1998, Ms. Allen was selected the Cybrarian of the Year, from out of 400 applicants nationwide. This award was designed to honor the efforts of librarians who act as Internet innovators.

Taking over the reigns of the Pasco County Library System in 2003 as Libraries Director, Ms. Allen is a continuing inspiration to her staff through her creative and trendsetting leadership.

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.

Ms. Allen is very supportive of the Friends of the Library group, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing Pasco County's public libraries through fundraising and advocacy efforts. The Friends sponsor countywide library projects and programs that encourage reading and lifelong learning in support of the Library's mission and goals.

Ms. Allen has recently assisted the Friends of the Library in establishing the Pasco Library Foundation, a charitable organization that will help provide for the financial and social future of the Pasco County Library System.

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

The Pasco County Library System offers programming for all ages. Babies and their family members can participate in Read to Me programs and baby signing classes at the library; toddlers and preschoolers along with their parents and caregivers can participate in storytimes, featuring special guests and book-themed celebrations. Young girls are captivated with American Girl parties, while young boys enjoy Thomas the Train events and movie matinees. Teens flock to the library for art shows, talent shows, open-mic poetry and gaming competitions while seniors visit the library repeatedly to attend book discussions, and gather to hear guest speakers and to learn new technologies.

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

"The best thing going in Pasco County," according to an April, 2007 Pasco Tribune Editorial, "is its library system, which according to some users would be the envy of some states. That's mighty high praise, and it's richly deserved, thanks to Director Linda Allen, her staff and county officials who have made library service a priority."

Ms. Allen's forward looking philosophy, from the beginning, has been the backbone of the Library System. Her goals to stay current with library trends, automation and technology benefit all Pasco County residents.

Pasco has built an exemplary Library System which plays a vital role in empowering citizens of all ages to learn and grow and to exercise their right to know in a democratic society.

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

Ms. Allen has worked hard to make a difference for the residents of Pasco County. She developed the Library System's Technology Plan which establishes clear goals and strategies for using telecommunications and information technology to improve library services. She worked with city

library leaders to form a Pasco County Library Cooperative, affording all citizens of the County a seamless level of library service.

Ms. Allen worked to establish a reciprocal borrowing program, with other libraries in the Tampa Bay area, which allows patrons to borrow materials from participating library systems. In 2002, Ms. Allen worked on establishing impact fees allowing for monies from new construction to be earmarked for library growth.

Ms. Allen supported the Virtual Reference Service (Ask A Librarian) making reference services available 24/7/365.

The Pasco County Library System, under the direction of Ms. Allen, became one of only two libraries in the State to offer an Adaptive Toy Collection, donated through the Friends of the Library. This collection was housed in one location and loaned out to residents throughout the County like other library materials. In 2008, another Adaptive Toy Collection was donated through the Friends of the Library and made available for loan.

Ms. Allen guided the expansion and renovation of two heavily-used branch libraries, increasing their size from 10,000 to 18,000 sq. ft. This allowed for separate children, teen and adult areas, which were widely requested by patrons. She also led the charge to improve the other library branches in the system to better meet the needs of the communities they serve.

The Pasco E-Government Initiative is itself yet another example of how Ms. Allen has raised the profile of the Pasco County Library System to a national level. Through E-Government resources created by an on-staff E-Government Librarian, citizens' transactions with businesses and other divisions of government are made easier through library links and the use of library computers.

Under Ms. Allen's leadership, the Pasco County Library System was awarded the 2008 Florida Library of the Year award from the Florida Library Association.

While Libraries across the country were struggling with what to do with teens, the Pasco County Library System, again under the direction of Linda Allen, promoted innovative and educational programming for teens in the library. This caught the attention of GolinHarris, the marketing firm of Nintendo America, who donated three complete Wii game consoles, a supply of video games, and a "first look" privilege for new games

because of the positive reputation that Ms. Allen has fostered for educational gaming at the Pasco County Library System. Ms. Allen's forward looking philosophy also inspired her staff to create the first ever library sponsored Battle of the Bands event (now in its tenth year) and to use MySpace and YouTube:

<http://www.myspace.com/pascolibraries>

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=pasco+library&search_type=&aq=fYouTube.

Ms. Allen also initiated a multi-tiered online blogging project that includes blogs for Senior Services, the Pasco County Resident Information Center, and E-Government Services among others.