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I Love My Librarian!

2008 Award

Nomination for Paul McIntosh

Library Media Specialist

Wadleigh Secondary School For The Performing and Visual Arts
New York, New York

Nominator:

Anthony Klug

New York, New York

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

I have known Paul McIntosh since I began my teaching career at Wadleigh Secondary School five years ago. As with all teachers, Mr. McIntosh has always given me tutelage and support while spreading wisdom and positive energy.

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.

Every year, Mr. McIntosh gives all teachers a library class visit form, student library assignment pass forms and a copy of rules for the library. Mr. McIntosh works intently to help students locate primary and secondary sources and aides them in the art of conducting research. He also verses students on how to conduct research on-line and how to utilize the schools' reference materials. He is incessant in helping students individually and ensures that all get the information they need. He has been particularly helpful in assisting my students with historical research and projects that involved writing biographies of family members and of citizens in the community. Mr. McIntosh has worked at Wadleigh for seven years and previously worked for the New York Public Library for ten years.

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

It is my firm belief that without Mr. McIntosh, there are many students who would have otherwise dropped out of school. Last year for example, Mr. McIntosh took interest in one student who hadn't come to school in months, endured an unstable home life, was depressed and who even attempted to commit suicide. Upon learning of the student's challenges, Mr. McIntosh convinced him to join other students who recite poetry, prose and spoken word after school. At the end of the school year, the (once shy and meek) student was in front of the entire auditorium reciting poetry that brought some students and teachers to tears. And the story of this one student is not uncommon: what amounted to deep catharsis for the young poet and inspiration for the audience, amounted to an average day's work for Mr. McIntosh.

Mr. McIntosh also employs students to assist him with the day-to-day upkeep of the library. Students reshelved books, sort magazines and arrange the library so it is as conducive to learning or for performances. They also participate in checking out materials and in the logistics of maintaining a smooth-running operation. Students also visit the library during their free periods to use one of the eight computers in the library (brought at the request of Mr. McIntosh) and Mr. McIntosh is always there to lend a hand with projects, research, essay writing and even grammar.

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

If a library is defined as a place where community is formed, ideas strengthened, minds engaged and spirits heightened, then no one is more deserving of this award than Paul McIntosh. During that time, Mr. McIntosh has made it his mission to turn Wadleigh's relatively small library into a center of learning, research and celebration. Wadleigh is situated on an urban block on 114th street in central Harlem. Wadleigh student body is 60% black, 40% Hispanic and virtually all students qualify for free or reduced lunch. In a school with few sports teams and extra-curricular activities, Mr. McIntosh has made the library the nexus of the school community.

Every year, Mr. McIntosh invites classes down to the library for a tour and to explain how to use the library's resources and to teach them the fundamentals of research. And while antiquated, he even takes five minutes to explain the Dewey Decimal system (partly because Mr. McIntosh has yet to received the funds he consistently lobbies for to catalogue the libraries' collection digitally). Mr. McIntosh also takes great care to ensure that the library is organized, hospitable and immaculate.

Mr. McIntosh holds month-long celebrations in the library to celebrate Latino-Heritage Month, Women's History Month, Black History Month and other events that celebrate our nation, community and students' identities. A poet himself, Mr. McIntosh often has friends and fellow artists come to speak to classes that assemble in the library. Mr. McIntosh also has students and teachers read selections from their favorite works to further embolden our community at Wadleigh. What's more is that of the many guests that come, none heretofore have received an honorarium. Even if water or snacks are to be provided, Mr. McIntosh unthinkingly springs into his own pocket.

The following guests will be visiting our school in October to celebrate Latino Heritage Month at the invitation of Mr. McIntosh: Dr. Jaime Nieto (Director of Neurosurgery at Cornell Presbyterian Hospital, Mabel Paulino (activist and founder of Fundacion Latina del Cerebro (Latina Brain Foundation)), Louie Gonzalez (urban word poet), Peggy Morales (mother, political activist, East Harlem District), Louis Reyes Rivera (poet) and Yafreici Peralta (poet).

A sampling of other guests who have come only because Mr. McIntosh is our librarian include:

Amiri Baraka (author, poet), Felipe Luciano (TV broadcaster), Ruben Studdard (American Idol contestant), Dr. Marta Moreno Vega (author, *When the Spirits Dance*; founder, Caribbean Culture African Diaspora Institute), Fernando Ferrer (Bronx Borough President), William C. Thompson (Comptroller of the City of New York), Ray Goodman and Brown (singing group), Wordslave (spoken word performance group), Rodney J. Reynolds (Editor, *American Legacy Magazine*), Regent Adelaide Sanford, Jamal Josheph (community organizer), Dr. Carole Vollel, Dr. Lyn Holden (Founder, *Mentoring in Medicine*), Willie Perdomo (author, *Smoking Lovely*), Dr. Jerald Thompson (inventor, dialysis technology), Tehut Nine (spoken word performer), Kurt Nugent (poet, writer, grand-slam poetry champion, Layding Kaliba (performer), Louis Reyes Rivera (author), Universes (spoken word performers), Jerry Roebuck (founder Black Expo), Flaco Navarro (spoken-word performer), Laura Bowman (actress), Eliza B (spoken word performer, singer, actress) Lloyd Williams, (CEO Uptown Chamber of Commerce), Wallace Gossett (Lead Attorney, NYC Transit Authority), The Last Poets, Jabari Osaze (VP, New York Urban League), Rev. Lawrence Lucas, Dr. Edison O. Jackson (President, Medgar Evers College), Kasim Alla (poet), Vaughn Harper (DJ, former basketball player), Dominic Carter (of New York 1 television), Shawn Dove (VP Fund for a Better New York). Rev. Herbert Daugtry (Civil Rights Activist), Wayne Dawson (Children's Aid Society), Charles Barren (Brooklyn City Council), Wesley Autry ('subway hero), Dr. Christian Drake, Harriet Fortson (NAACP),

Rashana Blake (author), Rosa Rivers (author). Alfonzo Wyatt (VP for the Fund of the City of New York), Peter Crawford (civil engineer, Howard University graduate), Grace Edwards (author), George Edward Tait (poet), Heru Ptah (author), Jeanette Adams (author), Sandra Marie Estevez (author), Mariachi Infantante (music group). Bill Perkins (New York City Council), C. Virginia Fields (Manhattan Borough President), Percy Sutton, The Thunderbirds (Native American Dance Troup).

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

In addition to bringing an array of guests to inspire, educate and motivate students, Mr. McIntosh has also sponsored the Mentoring in Medicine program at our school where doctors and medical students from Columbia and various other hospitals and universities meet with and mentor our students to encourage them and other people of color to chose professions in medicine. Mr. McIntosh also brings students to events and opportunities outside of the school such as an event held last spring by The National Association of University Women, an organization which gave a scholarship to a participating Wadleigh student.

Last year Mr. McIntosh created the second book featuring works of poetry and prose by famous poets and students and staff of Wadleigh titled: Old Flame New Fire II.

Please see the announcement made by Mr. McIntosh by email to all Wadleigh staff to celebrate this milestone below:

You may recall that Old Fire New Flame, an anthology of poetry with work and the forward written by Amiri Baraka was published in 2003 as part of the library program. Old Fire New Flame II has recently been published. This latest edition features the work and a forward by Abiodun Oyewole, founder and leader of the Last Poets. Old Fire New Flame II also includes the work of other published writers (Layding Kaliba, Laura Bowman and others). In this anthology you can read the work of students (Javon McKoy, Yahaira Crespo, Nuria Francisco, Gisette Jimenez, et al), former students(Crystal Ramos, Tiffany Butler, Curtis Williams, et al) and teachers such as Mr. Herbert Fisher, Ms. Jayette Brathwaite, Ms. Monique Blanding and Ms. Charan P.Morris. The first book was an attractive publication. The second book is equally attractive. A book party is planned. You are invited to stop by the library to see the book.

Be well,
Paul McIntosh

In conclusion, our school is full of great kids who are coping with bad situations. All too often, such students fall by the wayside if it weren't for the few who truly care who give them the place and opportunity to grow. Mr. McIntosh truly is an everyday miracle to this school and while he's humbled by the simplest 'thank you' I think this award is the best way to show our appreciation to this modest man – a librarian who makes a small room in a public school in Harlem feel like the center of the universe.