

I Love My Librarian!

Award

Jayanti Addleman
Director of Library Services
Hayward Public Library
Hayward, California

Nominated by: Judy Harrison, Lindsey Vien, Helene Carr, Zalak Trivedi, Myra Feiger, Muriel and Jim Sampson, Evelyn Cormier, Peter Bufete, and Sid Hamadeh

The City of Hayward has a population of nearly 160,000. It is one of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse communities in the nation. It is also among the lowest-income communities in the Bay Area. About 8% of families and 12% of the total population in Hayward are below federal poverty line, including 13% of those under age 18. Considering the large population and the fact that the City only has one Main Library in the downtown area and one small branch in south Hayward to serve a population of 160,000, you can imagine how busy the libraries are daily. Hayward Public Library (HPL) is a well-respected department among the City and community at large, so much so, that in 2014, Hayward residents voted in favor of sales tax measure to support the construction of a new lead platinum, net zero, 65,000 square foot downtown 21st Century Library and Community Learning Center. The community was very invested in the speedy construction of this facility.

Ms. Addleman came to HPL in January of 2019, as the new Director of Library Services, during a time of great transition for the department. Not only was the City in the middle of building a library that was already a year behind schedule to open, the old library had already been demolished and a majority of the staff were moved to various office spaces around the City. Staff were anxious and uncertain about their own duties, as well as what to expect in the near future. The community was also openly unhappy about the delays in construction and service loss. To say the least, with all this considered, this was going to be a complex job for any leader.

Ms. Addleman brought confidence and an infectious enthusiasm for serving the public that was immediately felt by all. With a calming finesse among what felt like chaos, she made it clear that library services were about serving people, regardless of whether there was a library building out of which to serve them. It was a ray of sunshine that the department very much needed. Under her leadership, HPL staff began to trust her vision and enthusiastically began to move forward with her direction: staff began to reserve meeting rooms at City Hall and partnered with the local Veterans Center to use their hall. Before long, HPL had restarted regular children's and adult programming in downtown, much to the delight of the community.

Ms. Addleman's focus is always on the user's experience and in inspiring staff to focus on the patrons and community. Her ability to look through the user's lenses to understand their disappointment with the delay in opening the library enabled staff to see things from a different perspective: "What was intended to be a good thing, is now a sore point. Let's remind the community that their library is wonderful." Her perseverance and creative thinking in navigating solutions to opening the new facility to the public took traction quickly. Once the computers and books were in the new library, she insisted that as long as the building was safe and the bathrooms were ready, that the building should be opened offering the community a taste of the new building and what was to come.

This excitement and hustle and bustle consumed staff and library patrons, quickly leading to the grand opening of the facility last September. Though construction still continues in parts of the building that remain off limits to the public, the community was simply delighted to be able to walk into the beautiful building and have access to their reading materials and computers; the children were thrilled to be able to come in once again for homework help; and the staff were so glad to not only have their own space to work in again, but also to be surrounded by their colleagues. It was a fresh, new beginning for all. Suddenly, the possibilities of new programming seemed endless!

Unfortunately, exactly six months after the new library opened, it had to close again because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In what was a dark time for many, Ms. Addleman's optimism and enthusiasm shone through. She quickly assessed the needs of the community, prioritized those needs, and began to direct staff accordingly during yet again, another unprecedented time. It is a necessity for Hayward residents to have access to library resources—so she began by having staff make it possible for members of the public to apply for a library card online and simply have the card number (e-card) emailed to them, followed by the physical card being mailed to them. Staff presented concerns about not being able to verify addresses with a driver's license or some other documentation; however, Ms. Addleman gently explained that receiving the card in the mail was verification enough of their address. This service has been greatly appreciated in the community during the lockdown and serves as another non-judgmental way of serving those who do not wish to share their personal information, especially those who may be undocumented members of the community. HPL serves all! She then began to assemble teams among the department, intentionally cross-pollinating divisions and levels of staff to encourage diversity among the creation of virtual library programming and curbside pick-up services. This push evoked excitement among staff to operate outside of their comfort zone, resulting in the creation of amazingly successful programs, policies, and procedures. It also kept all levels of staff engaged and interested in their work during modified duties and the closure of the facility.

If you ask Ms. Addleman, she will insist that the credit all goes to the staff, but her enthusiasm and encouragement carry staff along whenever they want to try new ways of serving the public. Now, during the pandemic, HPL has a robust Tech Lending Library offering hundreds of chromebooks, tablets, and hotspots to students who can no longer come to the library and school-based Homework Support Centers and are truly challenged by distance learning and the digital divide. Students can check-out technology for a one-year period. The library already had a strong partnership with Hayward Unified

School District, local institutions of higher learning, and many other organizations in the community, but since Ms. Addleman took over leadership, these partnerships have grown exponentially, and programs vastly expanded. For example, through her encouragement an innovative partnership with Stop E-Waste, the Education Services Division of the library was able to leverage 150 refurbished laptop and desktop computers to support distance learning for Adult Literacy learners. Furthermore, she rallied for various streams of private and public funding to support the additional purchase of hotspots and tablets that are now used to provide learners with access to Wi-Fi, enabling continuation of virtually meeting with tutors and continuing Career Online High School programming.

The COVID-19 pandemic really has highlighted the transportation challenges Hayward residents face, as well as the lack of technology to reserve materials online, often creating barriers to them utilizing curbside pickup services. Observing this, Ms. Addleman swiftly moved forward on leveraging resources to purchase a bookmobile for the community. She strategically reached out to a donor, concisely communicated the urgency of the community need and successfully obtained \$250,000 for the purchase of a new bookmobile that will be able to park easily in the busy neighborhoods of Hayward and take services and deliveries to many of the underserved and marginalized communities.

The other major change that Ms. Addleman moved forward during the pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement, is the push to get rid of overdue fines. Though this is an idea that is taking hold in many libraries, Hayward previously was unsuccessful in implementing the change. Again, Ms. Addleman strategically acted, and used the political climate to acknowledge the way minorities and people of color are unfairly impacted by overdue fines, and was successfully able to move the idea forward with the Library Commission; the Commission unanimously approved moving forward with the proposal.

Ms. Addleman is HPL's biggest cheerleader and is always there to help in any way that she can. She tirelessly reminds the community of the services the library has to offer, keeping services relevant and impactful. She ensures that programming is not only feel-good, but results driven, further positioning the library as a central force and resource to the community at large.

Since the opening of the new library, a lot of innovative programming has been introduced, including learner-centered, goal-based English Conversation Circles for learners wanting to transition into the Adult Literacy Program or learners who are awaiting a tutor. Ms. Addleman is genuinely interested in library programs, and is often seen dropping in, further supporting staff and library patrons alike. Her actual knowledge of programming has enabled her to initiate staff conversations to further expand programming—the idea of the very popular Spanish Conversation Circle. The Spanish Conversation Circles are led by graduates of the Adult Literacy Program. It is a reciprocal relationship where learners share knowledge learned and can give back to the library and the community. This was just the start of the many exciting programs that were to follow.

In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, she encouraged the team to focus on widening inclusiveness and diversity in program offerings and suggested that HPL have an online Readathon to mark Juneteenth. She not only participated herself, she encouraged elected and appointed officials to

participate. This Juneteenth readathon was so successful, there have been several more at the request of the community and elected officials alike.

When staff started an online cooking program called “HPL in the Kitchen,” Jayanti unabashedly broke the ice by demonstrating her fruit leather making skills. She admitted she was self-conscious, and the video was amateurish, but she felt it was important to step up and break the ice. This passion for encouraging new ideas and supporting any change that benefits the community is apparent repeatedly. As Program Assistant Terina McCraw put it while suggesting a major change in how the children’s books are shelved: “...because not only is Jayanti in charge... she is also wonderfully un-bothered by the standard conventions of such things; and she is working hard to make our library a truly welcoming place for everyone in our community.”

Ms. Addleman is a mover-and-a-shaker. She never misses an opportunity to connect with the public and community partners and stakeholders. She is there for fundraisers, graduations for Career Online High School program participants, and outreach in the community. She presents at Rotary and other community partner meetings—her presence is known by all. Most recently, she worked with Library Journal to bring the highly prestigious annual Design Institute to Hayward (unfortunately it had to go virtual because of the pandemic).

Ms. Addleman is proud of the library’s service to the community and makes sure everyone knows this. She supports staff in their creative approaches to serving the community and in growing their professional skills. Staff are always told about professional development conferences, and are encouraged to apply for career advancement opportunities, again creating a positive and healthy work environment. Staff at all levels are encouraged to step outside the box and try new ways to reach and serve the community. With Ms. Addleman’s enthusiastic encouragement, staff created a wildly popular music video to announce the launch of the curbside delivery program. She made sure she was singing the staff’s praises about this wonderful video. This led the City Clerk’s Office to contact Ms. Addleman to request library staff help make another music video encouraging residents to vote! This is a pattern, and repeatedly, she keeps library programming and services relevant and interesting to the public, and she makes sure everyone knows about the successes!

When Hayward became one of the first cities in the country to open a free COVID-19 testing site at one of its fire stations, Ms. Addleman was the first non-fire or medical staff person to volunteer to work at the site. In the early days she was the only non-Fire personnel to be working behind the scenes, and she tirelessly input test data and spoke to worried people who had been or needed to be tested. In addition, under her encouragement, one of the library’s senior managers became a coordinator for the City’s COVID-19 information hotline.

Ms. Addleman always shares information on volunteer or participation opportunities for events with HPL’s support groups - the Library Commission, the Literacy Plus Council, and the Board of the Friends of the Library. Though the Friends have always been quite involved as a team and as individuals in supporting library programs, members of the other two boards are now much more involved in events

like readathons, providing library tours, etc. She is a communicator, and in whatever she is doing, her focus is always the user experience and service to the community.

In conclusion, for the lengthy reasons highlighted above, we are nominating Ms. Addleman for the “I Love My Librarian” award. We love all of the positive changes to the library that have been implemented under her leadership. We also love the enthusiasm and passion she brings to her work and the inspiration she brings to all. HPL is truly the heart of the City, and the City is truly the heart of the Bay! Thank you for your consideration.