

This nomination is for the following award: **Librarian of the Year Award**

First Name **Kevin**

Last Name **Beach**

Library Affiliation (if applicable) **Manatee County Public Library**

Title (if applicable) **Operations Manager**

Street Address **1301 Barcarrota Blvd.**

City, State, ZIP **Bradenton, FL 34205**

Telephone Number **941 748-5555 x6325**

E-mail Address kevin.beach@mymanatee.org

Are you nominating an individual or a group/organization for this award? **Individual**

First Name **Ava**

Last Name **Ahde**

Library Affiliation (if applicable) **Manatee County Public Library**

Title (if applicable) **Library Manager**

Street Address **1301 Barcarrota Blvd**

City, State, ZIP **Bradenton, FL 34205**

Telephone Number **941 748-5555 x6301**

E-mail Address ava.ehde@mymanatee.org

Does the nominee possess at least a Master's Degree in Library Science (MLS, MLIS, etc.)? **Yes**

Will you be submitting any supporting documentation? **Yes**

If you would like us to review web pages in consideration of this application (including videos or other supporting materials that are stored online), please enter the Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) below.
(Separate document attached)

Essay **Ava Ehde has worked for Manatee Libraries for over fourteen years. She accepted a leadership role as Library Manager in 2011. Since that time her energy and devotion has set an example for the rest of the staff. Ava is involved in a number of community activities, particularly loving the outdoors, bicycling, dogs, and cooking. Ava strives to develop the leader within everyone. She invites all staff to participate in the county-sponsored leadership programs or to sit on working committees – seeding these groups with employees from every facility and staffing level. Frontline staff members, often clerical, are writing grants, planning our big events, judging contest entries, coordinating art displays, or creating tutorials on our website. Ava organized a program to cross train all staff so they are gaining insight into how each other handle issues, coordinate schedules, and resolve problems at their branches. Her most recent endeavor was to get 30 library employees trained in the Harwood method, a process through which we conduct community conversations in order to identify local aspirations and needs in order to better think “outwardly” when long range planning. This program has resulted in many new partnerships and has galvanized grassroots efforts in neighborhoods wanting future library facilities. Ava is resolute about the library’s importance as an equalizer for the ‘have-nots’, removing restrictive fines and teaching staff to be less judgmental toward the disenfranchised using**

our facilities. She also is a strong advocate of the library's role as a public forum in which censorship does not have a place. She instigated 'leader's tours', behind-the-scenes tours of how the library operates. The result has been a positive in-depth article in the local newspaper and an opportunity to place copies of the library's annual report into the hands of local movers and shakers. She created a wordless PowerPoint that can be tweaked when addressing any variety of community groups. She has worked diligently with the Library Board, six Friends groups, and the Library Foundation to let go of library stereotypes and embrace the new roles and services libraries must develop to remain relevant. Marketing efforts have resulted in improved brochures, digital frames at check out desks that advertise programs, and 'Little Free Library' boxes in our area parks. An improved level of communication with the staff and a transparency in administrative actions has increased morale system-wide. Ava ensures all complaints are addressed immediately; her insistence that all staff attend a customer service training session every year has produced improved results at our public desks. Ava asked all staff members develop a good 'elevator speech' plus a positive story to relate whenever they are told that libraries are irrelevant. These chance encounters often result in the enticement of a non-library user into our facilities. Ava has repurposed the public spaces in all of our library facilities. At Central Library high shelving was replaced and display spaces for art were created. We can easily make room for a fashion show runway or accommodate over 1000 fans hear Rays player Evan Longoria do a story hour. A new business incubator engages our downtown business clientele and our new creative lab invites teens to explore multimedia software, Arduino kits, robotics, industrial sewing, Minecraft, and many other creative activities. Our new circulating collection, 'Library of things' – which includes telescopes and binoculars, baking pans, and musical instruments – is another example of her creativity and forward thinking. All this is part of Ava's visioning for a library that responds to the needs of its community. Roving reference, expanded virtual services, and green initiatives have all proven successful. Her concept for a Lifelong Learning literacy outreach program is growing bigger each month. Our literacy coordinator visits distressed communities that need early childhood literacy and instructs children and adults via literacy kits, instructional toys, and manipulatives. The Library System is a part of Manatee County's Neighborhood Services Department (NSD). Ava has successfully assisted that department in attaining its goals to improve community collaboration, including a How Will We Grow initiative that determines the future of local social services. NSD staff reciprocates by assisting in the Library's signature events: ManaCon, Recycled Dreams Fashion Show, and Touch a Truck. Ava is involved in both FLA and ALA, serving on Florida's Leadership Development Committee and presenting for LLAMA at ALA. She is also board president this year for the Tampa Bay Library Consortium. Her unbound enthusiasm for library advocacy has led her to present for numerous regional and national organizations including PLA. She regularly puts in weekend and evening hours, truly believing library work is a labor of love. Ava also cares dearly for the staff. Every employee gets a birthday gift from her and she generously bought prizes for every participant at our annual training day. Ava took an underfunded, thinly staffed library and placed high expectations and outcomes on the staff knowing that through teamwork there is always room for an improved library program. We have initiated internship programs, won grants, and developed partnerships with other agencies to ensure projects were successful. Through Ava's efforts our library was designated Florida Library of the Year last year. In just five years as an administrator Ava has reset the library's priorities, raised the morale of a struggling staff, energized us to be more compassionate and community-aware, put us in position to consistently set circulation

and use records, and vaulted our reputation as an innovative organization that gets results.

Summary Library Manager Ava Ehde has successfully turned around a defeated, underfunded library system and in five years has made Manatee Libraries an award winning leader in innovation, compassion, and in 2016, Florida Library of the Year. Ave embraces all the most important tenets of librarianship: equalization, community engagement, literacy opportunity, lifelong self-education, creativity, compassion, and fun. Her enthusiasm is infectious, her energy unbounded, and her aspirations for the library are sky high. If anyone ever asked 'why not' it is her. Her professional leadership, commitment to community improvement, creative ideas for the future, ability to create partnerships, and simply find ways to get things done are unsurpassed.



County Administrator's Office
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, FL 34205
Phone: (941) 745-3717
www.mymanatee.org

March 13, 2017

Florida Library Association Awards Committee
Florida Library Association
P.O. Box 1571
Lake City, FL 32056-1571

Re: Nomination of Ms. Ava Ehde, FLA Librarian of the Year Award

Dear Committee:

On behalf of the Manatee County Neighborhood Services Department, I respectfully submit this letter of recommendation for Ms. Ava Edhe, Manatee County Library Services Division Manager, to the FLA Librarian of the Year Award Program.

Ms. Ehde has served as the Library Services Manager for the Manatee County Library System since 2011. During this time Ava helped the Library survive difficult budget cuts due to the downturn in the economy and still was able to use her leadership and management skills to lead the Library to being named the FLA 2016 Florida Library of the Year. In 2016, Ava was instrumental in helping to expand the funding sources for the library outside of just the general fund as she work hard to promote and was successful in acquiring a dedicated impact fee for libraries and helped to secure the passing of a half-cent sales tax for infrastructure. Among the projects that will be able to be completed in the next five years due this effort are expansions at the Braden River and Rocky Bluff Libraries and an exciting new facility in the ever growing area of Lakewood Ranch.

Ava is well known for her tenacious work ethic and constant mode of learning. She set the bar high in 2016/17 and began a collaboration with our cross county neighbors, Sarasota County by embarking on a special project, sponsored by the Patterson Foundation, the Public Innovators Lab concept from the Harwood Institute. Forty Manatee and forty Sarasota County Library staff members worked on pre-labs and completed a two and one-half day training workshop under the leadership of Rich Harwood and his team. Meant to open up the conversation with the community about aspirations it has been a key training element of the new long range planning efforts. Ava is also involved in a leadership capacity in FLA, ALA and

TBLC. She's seen as an innovator to her peers and her professional and leadership roles serve as an example for other managers within Manatee County and beyond.

Working with outside groups that support the Library beyond its normal means is not an easy task. Ava has a trusting and respectful relationship with all of the Friends of the Library groups with each Branch and with the Library Foundation that provides supplemental funding for Library needs. Her creativity is among her best assets. She moved swiftly to make creative changes to the Central Library and other branches. She coordinated a musical instrument use program and also has created a program that allows the sharing of unique cake pans to patrons. Both programs are extremely popular.

Technology proves to be ever evolving and in 2016 Ava requested new adaptive equipment for disabled patron use. The equipment is used daily and has allowed the opportunities for disabled patrons to be active in their own use of the Library, improving their self-sufficiency skills and expanding their ability to explore.

Three internationally known authors have spoken at a series of fund raising events to support the Library, Stephen King in 2015, Stephen King and John Grisham in 2016 and Nicholas Sparks in 2017. Funds from these events totaled over \$400,000 for programming, equipment and to support a program that Ava and her staff created called, "I am a Lifelong Learner". Designed to provide outreach services to underserved, low income children throughout Manatee County the program goal was to introduce to the children the lifelong advantages of a personal access to professional librarians, having your own library card and access to 24/7 resources. The program is expanding and has been very successful as it also partners with the campaign for grade level reading.

Ava has lead the way with transforming the Library System into an exciting learning and sharing environment for all Manatee County residents. Her efforts have allowed the showcasing of skill and professionalism of all of the Library staff, built self-esteem among the staff and encouraged staff to continue their advanced education in the Library environment.

If selected as the FLA Librarian of the Year Ava will set a shining example of the future of the Library system in the State of Florida and Nation.

Sincerely,

Cheri R. Coryea, Director
Neighborhood Services Department



March 11, 2017

Dear Members of the Florida Library Association Awards Committee,

I am writing to enthusiastically support the nomination of Ava Ehde, Director of Manatee County Public Library System, for the Florida Library Association's Librarian of the Year Award. Ava is doing nothing less than re-inventing the public library at Manatee County Public Library - and it's really exciting to behold!

Here is how Ava meets FLA's criteria:

Active Participation in Professional Associations – Ava is actively involved in the Florida Library Association and serves on the Board. She is active in ALA and the Public Library Association and was recently selected to participate in PLA's Leadership Academy March 20-24. She serves on the State Library of Florida's Leadership Development Committee and is President of the Tampa Bay Library Consortium Board and has several years' board service.

Exhibition of Exemplary Leadership Skills - Where Ava's leadership really shows is in her relationships with library staff and her community. Community engagement, staff innovation and development of innovative programs aren't just allowed at Manatee, they are expected. Staff are fully engaged and involved with their communities. They are encouraged and supported to be outward looking, connect with the public, provide programs that engage the public, and bring ideas back to the organization to help shape its direction.

An example of this engagement is Manatee's partnering with the Patterson Foundation and Sarasota County Public Library in implementing the Harwood Institute's Libraries Transforming Communities. Over 40 Manatee staff participated in the two and a half day training to learn how to turn outward and involve community members in community conversations. Library staff and administration are currently using the Harwood tools.

Ava works closely with the Manatee County Library Foundation, Patterson Foundation (a local community foundation), the Chamber of Commerce, Career Source, Score, and countless neighborhood and community groups. The Library Foundation's success in recruiting fundraiser speakers like Stephen King and John Grisham has made them the envy of their peers and provided funding for the library's literacy efforts.

Commitment to free access to information for all Floridians – Under Ava's direction, the library has engaged in library card sign-up initiatives with area schools and has implemented fine forgiveness.

Promotion of reading and the increased usage of library materials – Under Ava's leadership, Manatee is active in the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR). As part of the campaign she initiated "I Am a Lifelong Learner," a

program that delivers reading learning experience opportunities to young readers and their families in community centers and other locations in all areas of the community.

Evidence of creativity and/or innovation in providing services, resources and programs – Under Ava’s leadership the library has created a business incubator space and conducts an annual Small Business Expo in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and other business groups. The library has also initiated a “Library of Things” program that circulates telescopes and binoculars. One of the more unusual library programs Ava has initiated is a world travel program that takes participants to interesting parts of the world. The next stop for the “DownTown Library Voyagers” is South Ireland in May.

The library conducts many events that involve people including writers’ workshops and an open mic night for teens. The library recently launched Area 52, a creative lab with specialized sewing equipment and material cutting machines and is providing training in their use.

Significant and influential academic or research library service - Under Ava’s direction the library has developed a digitization program that is making the area’s historical images and documents available to all.

Contributions to the profession through research, publications, or presentations – Under Ava’s leadership the library has created a literary and arts journal “805 Lit and Art Journal.” And she has developed a strong relationship with the Bradenton Herald that regularly publishes articles about the library’s innovative services. These articles are widely shared and help market library services in her community and nationwide. As for presentations, Ava was featured in a TBLC video piece “Manatee County Libraries’ Workforce Development Collaboration” that shared this important work that she has led.

Planning or implementing a library program of exemplary quality - The library received the Betty Davis Miller Youth Services Award in 2016 and 2013. Among the youth services offered are hugely popular ManaCon and Teen Recycled Fashion Show. The library also received FLA’s Library of Year Award in 2016.

Outstanding work on a particular aspect of library service in the home library of the nominee - The library’s receipt of the Betty Davis Miller Awards substantiate the outstanding youth services provided under Ava’s leadership.

Thank you for your consideration of Ava Ehde as FLA's Librarian of the Year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "P".

Charlie Parker
Executive Director
Tampa Bay Library Consortium

Links to articles about Ava Ehde:

-Nominated for Tampa Bay Business Journal as businesswomen of the year:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/tampabay/promo/tamboty-ae-hde>

-Harwood training financed by Patterson Foundation:

<https://tblc.org/manatee-and-sarasota-library-staff-complete-the-harwood-public-innovators-lab/>

-Ava is selected to participate in 2017 PLA Leadership Academy:

<http://www.ala.org/pla/leadership/2017-academy-roster>

-Ava discusses circulating telescopes at library:

<http://cqrcengage.com/alaf1/app/document/17854858;jsessionid=1s3v1vpkiola413kub4fpy2us5>

-Ava discusses winning FLA's Library of the Year award:

<http://patch.com/florida/bradenton/congrats-manatee-co-library-system-just-named-library-year-0>



Ava gets ready to invite Stephen King and John Grisham to the stage for a fundraising event – 2016



Ava meets author Nicholas Sparks before another fundraiser for literacy.



Ava – a thoughtful and dedicated leader.....



With her own unique style and sense of humor.