

This nomination is for the following award: **Libraries Mean Business Award**

First Name **Amy**

Last Name **Ackerman**

Library Affiliation (if applicable) **St. Johns County Public Library System**

Title (if applicable) **Assistant Branch Manager**

Street Address **1960 N Ponce de Leon Blvd**

City, State, ZIP **St. Augustine, FL, 32084**

Telephone Number **904-827-6940**

E-mail Address aackerman@sjcfl.us

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

Library (Other Organization or Research Team) Being Nominated **St. Johns County Public Library System**

First and Last Name of Head of Organization **Debra Rhodes Gibson**

Title of Head of Organization **Director**

Street Address **6670 US1 South**

City, State, ZIP **St. Augustine, FL, 32086**

Telephone Number **904.827.6925**

E-mail Address of Head of Organization dgibson@sjcfl.us

Was the program conducted within the previous calendar year? **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.
<http://dos.myflorida.com/library-archives/services-for-libraries/florida-libraries-as/disaster-response/st-johns/>

Essay The historic downtown area of St. Augustine, Florida and nearby beach communities of Vilano and Anastasia Islands were badly flooded during our brush with Hurricane Matthew on October 7, 2016. While we were fortunately spared a direct hit, we were unable to avoid the seven foot storm surge. Many residences and businesses received considerable structural damage and much of St. Johns County suffered downed power lines and trees. The public library system was closed for several days following the hurricane as emergency operations crews worked feverishly to resume basic electrical, utility, and infrastructural services. In the meantime, library staff cleaned up their homes, helped their colleagues with damages, offered guest rooms to suddenly homeless friends, and many worked at the county's Emergency Operations Center. Staff got the call on Sunday that the libraries would be reopening in whatever capacity possible the following day. Some staff members had experience with hurricane recovery and knew that some of the most important things that could be immediately offered to the community were air conditioning, internet access, and a place to recharge their cell phones. Staff contacted various groups and presenters who had been scheduled to use the large meeting room and cancelled all events for the following two weeks. Tables and chairs were set

up near electrical outlets in the meeting room, a notice was put on the library's website, and a poster display was set up near the front door inviting patrons to go in and take advantage of our resources. Throughout the first open Monday, more and more damage reports started coming in about how extensive the flooding had been in our downtown area where many small businesses were located. While St. Augustine has its share of national chain retail stores and restaurants, we have a large and thriving small business community. Many residents and tourists love our city for the unique specialty stores, art galleries, and restaurants. Staff wanted to reach out to the local small business owners to let them know the library was ready and available to help them with their connectivity and meeting space needs. Staff immediately contacted leaders in the business community – Marge Cirillo in the local satellite office of the University of North Florida's Small Business Development Center and Melissa Glasgow, the Director of Economic Development of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners. They were enormously beneficial in getting the word out to the local business community that the library was open for business and ready to help. Melissa Glasgow thought it was a great idea and went so far as to draft and publish a press release aimed at local businesses (see supporting documentation). The response from local businesses was overwhelmingly positive. As noted in an October 12th article from the Historic City News website, www.historiccity.com, "We had to evacuate Monday because the owner of the iconic building was beginning the cleanup, which meant we had no telephone, no Internet, and no way to continue operations," editor in chief, Michael Gold, said. "I had a page-long list of emergency to-do's and none of them were going to get done if I didn't have some place to sit and work." The Library filled a critical gap for Historic City News offering electricity, light, WiFi Internet, air conditioned office space in their public conference room, covered tables and comfortable chairs, and, very importantly, working restrooms." (Full article here: <https://historiccity.com/2016/staugustine/news/florida/main-library-offers-displaced-businesses-temporary-quarters-60610>). The beauty of this service is that it was a simple, yet effective, thing that we could do for the public. All it took was reframing and spotlighting our existing library services. Our daily door counts were rapidly rising and we were short-staffed as several of our colleagues were out dealing with their own insurance adjusters and clean-up. We waived fines and offered free faxing, printing, and notary services to anyone affected by the hurricane, and once word got out about that, we became even busier. Simply offering up space was something we could easily do without requiring any additional staff time. Dolly Frank from the Bureau of Library Development of Florida's Division of Library and Information Services expressed that she had been inspired by various library systems' responses following the hurricane, and asked Karen Joslin, Special Projects Consultant, to put a story up on the state library's website. Karen chose to spotlight the St. Johns County Public Library System's responses as she felt they were the most comprehensive of all other affected library systems. In addition to reaching out the business community, branches in the library system served as drop off locations for supplies for the local food pantry, schools, and pet rescue organizations. Our website and social media accounts were updated frequently to help push out relevant recovery information. (Full article here: <http://dos.myflorida.com/library-archives/services-for-libraries/florida-libraries-as/disaster-response/st-johns/>). Melissa Glasgow and Marge Cirillo proved to be valuable assets in communicating up-to-date business recovery information to library staff so that we were in turn able to effectively disseminate those updates to our library patrons. If it's possible to have any silver linings to disaster recovery, one was that we learned the strength of our little community, and we also discovered the truth to Mister Rogers' famous quote, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are

helping'."

Summary Following the flooding from Hurricane Matthew, the Main Library of the St. Johns County Public Library System opened their meeting rooms to area residents with a focus on small business owners, inviting them to use air conditioning, internet access, and a place to recharge themselves and their devices. Printing, faxing, and notary services were offered at no charge to hurricane victims. Communication with the local satellite office of the University of North Florida's Small Business Development Center and the county's Economic Development department proved invaluable during the recovery process in aiding small business owners.

SMALL BUSINESS

RECOVERY RESOURCES @ your library

Virtual office space is available to you!

- free public wifi
- access to desktop computers with Microsoft Office products
- printing
- free scanning
- fax services
- Public Notaries at some branches
- librarians to help you find what you're seeking

Anastasia Island Branch Library
124 Seagrove Main Street
St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080
904-209-3730

Bartram Trail Branch Library
60 Davis Pond Blvd
Fruit Cove, FL 32259
904-827-6960

Hastings Branch Library
6195 S. Main Street
Hastings, FL 32145
904-827-6970

Main Library
1960 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd.
St. Augustine, FL 32084
904-827-6940

Ponte Vedra Branch Library
101 Library Blvd.
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
904-827-6950

Southeast Branch Library
6670 US1 South
St. Augustine, FL 32086
904-827-6900

St. Johns County
Public Library System
www.sjcpls.org



Search Catalog

OCTOBER, 2016

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RECHARGE AND CONNECT

🕒 11:00 am - 7:00 pm 📍 Main Branch

☰ EVENT DETAILS

Need a place to plug in and recharge? The Main Library has free wifi, computer access, outlets, tables and chairs for you to come and sit a spell. We also have a fax machine and scanners available for you to send out your documentation. We even have a notary on staff! We've dedicated our large meeting room this week for folks who need a spot to retreat from the generators and the mops.

🕒 TIME

(Tuesday) 11:00 am - 7:00 pm

📍 LOCATION

Main Branch
1960 N. Ponce De Leon Blvd. St. Augustine, FL 32084



CALENDAR [GOOGLECAL](#)





St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

Office of the County Administrator | Economic Development

February 17, 2017

Florida Library Association
541 E. Tennessee St. #103
Tallahassee, FL 32308

To Whom It May Concern:

Within days following Hurricane Matthew, staff at the Main Library of the St. Johns County Library System responded immediately by offering temporary office space for small businesses who experienced damage or were unable to operate within their place of business. St. Johns County, Small Business Development Center, and a variety of other sources helped communicate this message to the business community through a number of business recovery communications. This outreach included coverage in several news outlets about the assistance being made available by the county's Main Library. Staff welcomed all small business owners to the Main Library, and later extended this access to other library locations throughout the county.

As Director of Economic Development, I want to express my genuine appreciation to the Main Library's staff for their idea and willingness to make public space available at our library system to assist our local business community. They established a dedicated room for these business owners to operate a virtual office, and made private meeting space available on an as-needed basis. The business community also had access to all available library resources including: Wi-Fi, computers, notary services, printers and scanners. They filled an immediate need during a particularly stressful time.

One can only imagine how something as small and basic as tables and chairs in an air-conditioned room helped our local business community make great strides to get back on their feet. In short, many local small businesses benefited from this opportunity and expressed their sincere appreciation to the library and to the county for meeting their needs in a time of crisis. Debra Rhodes Gibson, Main Library Director, and the entire library staff are dedicated to serving the community, including the over 8,000 businesses located in St. Johns County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa S. Glasgow". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Melissa S. Glasgow
Director of Economic Development



Helping Businesses Grow & Succeed

FSBDC at the University of North Florida

12000 Alumni Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32224

P 904.620.2476

F 904.620.2567

www.sbdc.unf.edu

February 16, 2017

To Whom it May Concern

I am a business consultant with the Florida Small Business Development Center in St Johns Florida. It is my honor to recognize the Main Library of the St. Johns County Public Library System. On October 7, 2016, Hurricane Matthew hit the St Augustine Area hard. There was major damage to homes and businesses. For weeks, people were without the everyday necessities of running water, cable or electricity.

The library and its employees stepped up to fill an immediate gap in the small business community by offering electricity, internet access, printing, digital scanning, fax services, notary services, private meeting space, and something as small and basic as a table and chairs in an air conditioned room. I referred many business owners to the library so they could complete Federal assistance forms and try to have some semblance of normalcy. Without these services, many business would be out of business today but instead, they are open for business as usual. Again, my sincere thanks to everyone at the library.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marge Cirillo".

Marge Cirillo
Consultant
FSBDC at the University of North Florida
4040 Lewis Speedway
St. Augustine Fl. 32084-8637
P 904.209.1295
F 904.620.2567
m.cirillo@unf.edu



St. Johns County Emergency Management

October 11, 2016
For Immediate Release

St. Johns County Provides Temporary Office Space at Main Branch Library for Businesses Affected by Hurricane Matthew

St. Johns County, FL – St. Johns County is making public space available this week at the Main Branch Library, 1960 North Ponce de Leon Blvd., St. Augustine, to assist businesses in need of a temporary virtual office location. The large meeting room will provide tables, chairs, and public Wi-Fi for business representatives on a first-come, first-serve basis to conduct general business activities. The normal bank of computers are also available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Business representatives needing space this week to conduct private meetings may contact Main Library Assistant Branch Manager Amy Ackerman at 904.827.6940. For additional information about post-Hurricane Matthew business relief, please visit www.sjcfl.us, follow the County on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SJCFL, or call the Citizen Information Line at 904.824.5550.

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