

December 12, 2017

Texas Library Association Awards
3355 Bee Cave Road, Suite 401
Austin, TX 78746

Dear Awards Committee:

I am honored to provide information to support the nomination of Ms. Jennifer Coffey, the Director of the Pflugerville Public Library, for the Texas Library Association Librarian of the Year Award. As one of the Assistant City Managers at the City of Pflugerville, I have the privilege to work with Jennifer, the library staff, the Library Board and the Friends of the Library to continue to improve our service to the community.

Jennifer has worked at the City of Pflugerville for eleven years, first as a librarian who served as an interim director at times as we struggled to find the right fit for our library. She was promoted to assistant director in 2011 and I was very pleased that she accepted the position of Library Director in 2015. The Pflugerville area continues to experience exponential growth. The city now boasts a diverse population of nearly 60,000 people. The Pflugerville Public Library serves an important role in the community offering an expansive collection and a wide array of programs for all age groups. In fact, under Jennifer's leadership, the library has positioned itself as the "living room of the community," offering entertainment, personal development, and a gathering place for a rapidly growing city. I cannot overemphasize the welcoming attitude for ALL that Jennifer has established with the physical library facility, our online presence, and her staff development.

The library continues to expand its presence in the community. During the last fiscal year over 207,000 patrons visited the library, over 30,000 patrons attended programs, and over 446,000 physical and electronic materials circulated. For a city of this size, this usage demonstrates the great value the community places on the library as both a resource for information and a gathering place. At a recent Library Board meeting one of the board members summed it up best by saying, "The library is the one place in the city where all people in the community from all walks of life come together."

Jennifer continues to push the library in new directions by cultivating partnerships with a variety of community groups. In addition to nurturing a wonderfully productive relationship with the Friends of the Library and working with the Library Board on issues important to our City Council and its patrons, Jennifer also started a partnership with the Pflugerville Animal Welfare Services (PAWS) to sponsor animals that are available for adoption at the library. This partnership has provided access to dogs and cats who are available for adoption at a more visible location for members of our community who haven't visited PAWS. At least twenty animals have found forever homes through the efforts of Jennifer and her staff. The addition of animals to the library was so well received that a new program called the Kitty Café was started to encourage patrons to come pet the kitties, have some coffee and consider adoption.

Jennifer is very aware of the diverse needs in her community. She is always on the leading edge of new opportunities in technology with offerings in the physical library along with ways, beyond checking out a book, to take the library home. Our library makerspace, the Pfab Lab, is one of the most innovative in the area with equipment ranging from 3-D printers, a laser cutter, and embroidery machines. The equipment alone would be one thing, but Jennifer has cultivated a staff who takes that equipment and does the most imaginative things with it. The Pfab Lab is used constantly for various programs or just for people to dabble. The library collection includes forty Wi-Fi hotspots that patrons can check out for two week intervals to take the internet home with them. Micro –projectors are also available for check out. Other non-traditional items available for check out range from ukuleles to 3-D pens to telescopes. Jennifer made use of donation funds to purchase a book bike that will be used at city events and other outreach opportunities to increase awareness about the library's offerings. The bike has speakers, Wi-Fi, a projector, and space for books allowing for a "pop-up" library to be created on the spot.

Jennifer also uses emerging technologies to provide the Pflugerville community with important connections to the past. She created a local history digital archive that is an ongoing project that preserves and shares the history of Pflugerville. Through the archive, historic items like pictures and documents from the community are digitized and made available online. She and her staff are now managing the Heritage House Museum, a local history museum owned by the City of Pflugerville and managed by a volunteer board. Since the change in city department structure brought the museum under the library, hours and programming have been expanded and important restoration work completed. Jennifer organized the Pflugerville Historical Society in an attempt to gather the various groups and individuals in the community interested in preserving local history. Jennifer hosts a monthly meeting of a Genealogy Club where she helps attendees with their own family history research.

Library directors must manage a staff, balance a budget, and participate in various management responsibilities. Jennifer does an excellent job of management which is demonstrated with a number of various charts and graphs that show the status of library usage, expenditures and other interesting library facts. While focusing on the big picture, Jennifer cares about every individual that comes in or near her library and offers any assistance that she or her staff can. When Jennifer was told by a Rotary Club member that someone was sitting in their car in the parking lot, she invited him into the library to use our free Wi-Fi (which he was using in the parking lot) and explained the many services the library provides. Upon engaging him, she found out he was homeless and connected him with additional resources he might need. For another patron who is home bound, Jennifer delivers books to her on a regular basis, selecting items based on her interests. These examples show the empathy, patience and importance of the individual that she models and works to instill in library staff.

By cultivating an innovative environment, making extending access to important technologies a priority, and providing the highest level of service, Jennifer has ensured the Pflugerville Public Library is an important institution in the community. With her professional expertise and strong leadership, she continues pushing the library to explore new ground while remaining true to the services patrons expect. The culture of creativity and innovation she created has led to staff developing large, well-attended events at the library like the Pflugerville Library Comic Con and an Eclipse Viewing Program, both with over 2,000 attendees.

As the community continues to grow and along with it the popularity of the library, Jennifer has started the conversation regarding additional library locations throughout the city. She realizes that you have to plant a seed, water it, trim it to the appropriate size at the appropriate times, and then let it develop. Jennifer is passionate about her position, her staff, her patrons and the library profession. She is supportive of ALA and TLA guidelines and uses them to educate the Library Board and City Council. Jennifer is a well-deserving candidate for the Librarian of the Year Award because she is an innovative library director who is focused on ensuring everyone in the community has access to knowledge and technology. She acknowledges that although libraries will continue to change, our Pflugerville Public Library will always be an important, innovative, and sustainable place in the City of Pflugerville.

Without reservation, I support the nomination of Jennifer Coffey, the City of Pflugerville Library Director, as Librarian of the Year.

Cordially,

Lauri Gillam
Assistant City Manager
City of Pflugerville