

NJLA NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

December 2023

Vol. 21 Issue 5

Important Dates

Nominations needed for Member-At-Large Position on the NJLA Executive Board

Deadline: December 31

Contact: office@njla.org

2024 NJ Academic Libraries Conference

Friday, January 5

8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

NJLA Executive Board Meetings

Tuesday, January 16 at 10 a.m.

Tuesday, February 20 at 10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 19 at 10 a.m.

New Jersey Makers Day

Friday, March 15 - Sunday, March 17

View the [NJLA Events Calendar](#) for all meetings and events.

IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Message	2
Letter from the Executive Director	3
ALA Great Stories	5-6
MentorNJ Meetups	7-8
Bookmobiles	9-10
Section Spotlight	11
Featured Partner	12
Free Period Kits Initiative	13
Member Spotlight	14
NJ Library Card Project	15
People & Places	17



NEW JERSEY
NJLA
LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **CARINA GONZALEZ**

Are you passionate about advocating for library services, providing educational opportunities for library staff, and supporting intellectual freedom? If so, please consider joining the NJLA Executive Board. We currently have one immediate opening for member-at-large, and are getting ready to vote for next year's team.

As a board member, you'll have the opportunity to influence the direction of NJLA's initiatives and contribute to the enrichment of libraries across the state. The Executive Board plays a role in state-wide legislation that affects libraries, guides strategic decisions, and ensures that NJLA continues to thrive as a dynamic force for positive change.

Joining the Executive Board offers a unique chance to collaborate with library workers, exchange ideas with professionals in the library and information science field, and stay informed of industry trends.

Moreover, serving on the Executive Board provides a platform to develop leadership skills, broaden your professional network, and leave a lasting legacy in NJLA's history. Your dedication contributes to shaping the future of libraries in New Jersey, making them even more accessible, inclusive, and innovative.

If you're ready to take your commitment to libraries to the next level, consider joining the NJLA Executive Board. Together we will build a future where libraries are vibrant hubs of knowledge, culture, and community engagement.

How does someone get on the Executive Board of NJLA? Nominations for the Board are made by the Nominations and Elections Subcommittee of the Member Services Committee. Nominations may also be made by petition, which must contain the signatures of 15 individual members endorsing the candidate, plus the written consent of the candidate. To be elected, a candidate must receive a majority of votes cast or a plurality of votes cast when three or more choices are possible.

Carina Gonzalez (she/her) is a Senior Adult Services Librarian with the Piscataway Public Library and the current NJLA President. Her passions in librarianship include social justice, access, and intellectual freedom. She began her career as an Elementary School Library Media Specialist followed by being a High School Library Media Specialist. She then went on to become an Outreach Academic Librarian before finally finding her home in public librarianship. Carina is an accomplished writer, professional web designer, and entrepreneur. You can learn more about her at www.librariancarina.com.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by **BRETT BONFIELD**

I recently attended my first New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) conference at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City. I loved it! We have sensational colleagues and partners across the state, and I couldn't be more grateful to NJASL for making me feel welcome and valued.

A major topic at the conference was the importance of diverse books, and the need to protect those books from censorship. I was especially moved by Ellen Oh, a founding member of We Need Diverse Books and an award-winning author, who delivered the best keynote address I have seen at a library conference.

Her story was personal and universal, addressing her individual and family members' struggles with war, racism, sexism, and mental health. She also touched on how you people need to be supported so they can accomplish great things. Oh highlighted the student-led Gwangju Uprising, which was documented in a monumentally important, banned book, *Gwangju Diary*. She also highlighted the student walkout led by Barbara Johns, which was instrumental in bringing about *Brown v. Board of Education* (Barbara Johns later earned her MLS at Drexel University and became a librarian in the School District of Philadelphia).

NJLA and NJASL are working together with multiple partners to refine and support the Freedom to Read Bill that is co-sponsored by Senators Zwicker and Ruiz. If all goes according to plan, this partnership will once again demonstrate New Jersey's leadership in intellectual freedom and information literacy. Passing this bill would extend the work we did together to support the Information Literacy Bill, which is the first in the nation to require K-12 information literacy education. A key element in making this initiative successful will be reinforcing and expanding on these skills when students go to college or join the workforce. We also need to complement their knowledge by sharing similar opportunities for skill development with their family members and every other member of the community. All libraries in New Jersey need to work together to create an intellectually free and increasingly information-literate ecosystem for our students, colleagues, and neighbors.

On that note, I'm thrilled that I get to bookend this month by attending the New Jersey Academic Libraries Conference on January 5 at Middlesex County College. What divides us professionally is far less interesting than what unites us. I see it every day, and never more clearly than when I see you in person. I look forward to seeing you frequently in 2024!

Brett Bonfield is NJLA Executive Director as of March 20, 2023. He has worked in libraries since 2006, including 11 years as the director of two public libraries in NJ. Most recently, Brett served as the Chief Operating Officer at the Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Brett has held leadership positions in nonprofits and library organizations including NJLA, the American Library Association, Public Library Association, Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati, and OhioNet. Brett received his MS in Library and Information Science from Drexel University.





NJLA Newsletter

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OTHER NJLA NEWSLETTERS:

**Use these links to access
the latest newsletters from
other NJLA Sections.**

[Professional Development](#)

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INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING?

For all inquires, please contact

newsletter_editorenjlamembers.org

Proposals for the Spring 2024 issue are due on January 29th.

ALA GREAT STORIES

Librarian at Highland Park Public Library Wins National Grant to Lead a Book Club for Underserved Teens

by MELAINA SQUICCIARINI

On any given day, 58 out of 100,000 New Jersey youths are held in juvenile facilities, with Black youths overrepresented in the incarcerated population ([The Sentencing Project](#) and [The Children's Defense Fund](#)). When children in our communities are sent away to placement in facilities they lose access to library services. What is it like to bring library services to teens living inside a juvenile detention center?

That was the big question I had when I applied to ALA's Imagining Tomorrow: Building Inclusive Futures grant, proposing a book discussion group held at Turning Point Academy, the internal school of a nearby juvenile detention center which serves five counties in the state. At that point, I had already been working with school principal Phyllis Lewis on a book drive for over a year. After building this relationship with the school by providing the students with reading materials, I hoped to be able to actually work with the teens through outreach programming.

The grant includes a stipend of \$500 as well as eleven paperback copies of the five chosen titles. Each student who participates in reading and discussing the books will receive a certificate, which they can present to the judge at trial. ALA awarded grants to 27 libraries nationwide, and the Highland Park Public Library's Youth Services Department was honored to be included. I was thrilled to finally be able to go into the detention center and meet the kids.

The answer to my question shouldn't shock anyone: Teens who are experiencing incarceration are much the same as teens in your library. They have questions, get excited over silly things, LOVE snacks and pizza, and talk over each other during conversations. They want to be liked and, more importantly, heard. They want fun assignments and art projects. They crave normalcy while living in a place that is anything but normal.

Through the Imagining Tomorrow: Building Inclusive Futures grant, I have been lucky to work with English teacher Natalie San Juan. The bonded relationship Natalie has formed with the

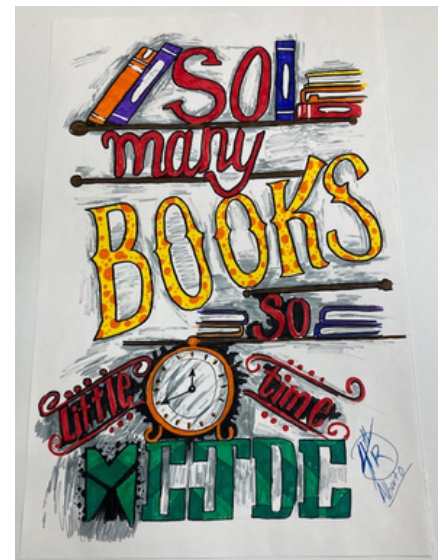
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students is clear from the way their faces light up when they enter her classroom, as well as the respect they give her when she redirects them from a conversational tangent. Natalie knows each student deeply and is able to decide on which kids will benefit the most from participating in our discussion group.

One of the main goals of this grant is allowing students to enjoy freedom of expression through art. This is particularly important when so much of their lives is being controlled inside the detention center. We listen to music relating to the stories we read, pairing *War Girls* by Tochi Onyebuchi with traditional Nigerian and Biafran music and current songs by Nigerian artists, such as Rema's "Calm Down." We paint the starry night skies that *The Marrow Thieves* characters see while evading capture and being sent to institutional schools, and students talk about what has been stripped from their own cultures while they are incarcerated and awaiting trial.

I remind them to keep an open mind as we talk about race, gender, freedom, and the different lives we are all living. The students ask questions freely and we answer them honestly, holding a discussion as any book club would. And, just as snacks attract teens to our programs in the library building, honey barbecue chips (the current favorite) get these teens into a comfortable headspace to talk about their futures, their families, and themselves.



Student-created artwork for the Turning Point Academy book drive.

This program reminds students that they are important and whole beings, even while living removed from society. Through connecting literature to students' own lives and stories through creative self-expression, we aim to spark hope for their futures during re-entry and beyond.

Full press release can be found [here](#).

Melaina Squicciarini (They/Them) is the Youth Services Librarian specializing in Teens at the Highland Park Public Library. They hold a Masters of Information from Rutgers University in New Brunswick. They present on topics such as building and sustaining relationships through empathy as well as serving teens and the LGBTQIA+ population. Melaina established and maintains a wellness station at the library, and works to connect with the vulnerable populations in town. They are currently serving on the ALA Rainbow Round Table Book List Committee and as the Member at Large of the NJLA Young Adult Services Section. Their email address is msquicciarini@hpplnj.org.

MEET US AT A MEETUP:

MentorNJ Online Meetups

by **DARBY MALVEY**

The MentorNJ initiative is a project of LibraryLinkNJ designed to help bring together library workers from around the state for mentorship, networking, and peer support. While the MentorNJ initiative includes several components, one that has been going strong for several years now is the MentorNJ Online Meetups. These virtual, drop-in opportunities for library staff to meet and engage with each other can provide everything from advice about workplace concerns to a simple break from the daily grind with friendly colleagues.

Meetups typically occur monthly or bi-monthly, and one of the best things about them is that all are welcome to attend! Library staff don't need to join a group or even register in advance. Zoom links are shared via LibraryLink's email list each Monday for all the Meetups occurring that week. Simply save the email and click the Zoom link when it's time to join! All NJ library staff can easily set up a free LibraryLinkNJ account on our [website](#) to be sure they receive the emailed links each week. Meetups are also listed on the LibraryLinkNJ [event calendar](#)!



In-person Tech meetup at the 2023 NJLA Conference

With an average of about 12 Meetups per month, there's just about something for everyone. Our current list of Meetups include:

- Adventures in Administration
- API Meetup
- Disabled Library Staff Meetup
- Juggling Parenting & Library Work
- Latino Library Staff Meetup
- Leading Lean Libraries
- Makers Meetup (*NEW, starting in January!)
- School Library Meetup
- Tech
- Wellness Wednesday
- Youth Services

Article continues on next page.

Meetups provide a great opportunity for library staff to connect with colleagues who are going through similar challenges or experiences. As one regular attendee of the Leading Lean Libraries meetup recently wrote, "This has been great. I like the informality of it, and knowing there is a place to go with my 'stupid' questions that is safe and non-judgmental." These one-hour conversations offer support, guidance, and a space for sharing victories or commiserating about set-backs.

If you don't see a Meetup listed above that meets your needs or interests, you are encouraged to start your own! Being a Meetup discussion leader can require a time commitment of as little as one hour every other month, and is a great way to meet colleagues from all over the Garden State.

To suggest a Meetup topic or seek further information about the MentorNJ Meetups, feel free to reach out MentorNJ Task Force Chair Darby Malvey, darby@librarylinknj.org.



In-person Adventures in Administration meetup at the 2023 NJLA Conference

Darby Malvey is Programming and Outreach Manager and MentorNJ Task Force Chair at LibraryLinkNJ, the New Jersey Library Cooperative. She holds an MLIS from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ. Darby has professional experience in both school and public libraries, and serves as the NJLA liaison to NJASL. Her passion is bringing library staff together and helping to build the NJ library ecosystem. You can reach Darby at darby@librarylinknj.org.

NOTES FROM THE ROAD: Outreach Services at the Monroe Township Public Library

by KELLY PALOMBIT



Bookmobile and outreach services look different in every library, but the goal always remains the same: to meet the community outside the walls of the building in an effort to increase accessibility of library services. Reaching priority populations and infrequent or non-library users is a vital part of outreach.

In the last several years, Monroe Township has seen a surge in residential building and a rapidly growing population. The Monroe Township Public Library strives to keep up with the ever-growing town by continually expanding outreach services. In 2015, we were able to increase capacity and offer a larger, more diverse collection with the purchase of a new 28' Freightliner Walk-In Van Aeromaster. Patrons are able to board the vehicle and browse the bookmobile's collection of juvenile, young adult, and adult materials.

Additionally, visitors can obtain a library card, learn about library services, and renew or return items.

The bookmobile operates on a three-week rotation, with the current schedule consisting of seven adult communities, 11 residential neighborhoods, nine schools, and one childcare facility. We have found success in visiting clubhouses in adult communities in the mornings and focusing on school bus stops in the afternoons. Stops at elementary school after-care programs have been a great opportunity for students to get their first library card and regularly check out books. In addition to the regular schedule and community events, we add evening stops and visits to the extended school-year program during the summer.

When starting a new bookmobile stop, consistency is key. Some stops may start out slower than expected, but it can take time to spread the word and build the trust of the community. Both staff presence outside the vehicle and lawn games help make the bookmobile feel more approachable. Utilizing a text message service to send reminders to residents about visits is also extremely helpful in maintaining a following.

In addition to our bookmobile, the library also has a Ford Transit Van, which is used for home-delivery services. The At Home Services team delivers library materials to patrons' homes and to assisted living facilities. Currently, the library provides home delivery to 97

Article continues on next page.

patrons. The Outreach Department recently launched a new service, Bundles of Joy, for residents welcoming a new child into their home. These groups of patrons may be at very different points in their lives, but can experience both isolation and obstacles in accessing library services. Home delivery not only provides library materials, but also connection with others. Dedicated outreach staff is your most valuable tool.



*Monroe Township Public Library
Bookmobile*

Figuring out the needs in your community and what works for your residents may take trial and error.

Some libraries have multiple vehicles and staff members dedicated to outreach, while other libraries are a team of one with no vehicles. Whether you are starting from the ground up or expanding on current services, getting out into the community is what matters most. Remember, outreach is not one-size-fits-all.

Kelly Palombit is Head of Outreach Services at the Monroe Township Public Library.

The Library of Congress Federal Credit Union is a supporter of the NJLA Newsletter.

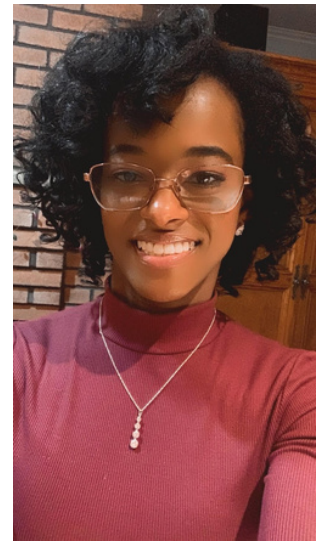
More information can be found [here](#).



SECTION SPOTLIGHT: Library Workers of Color

by **DANIELLE PITTER**

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Hip-hop music, the New Jersey Library Association's Library Workers of Color Section recently explored The Book of HOV: A Celebration of the Life and Work of Shawn "Jay-Z" Carter exhibit at the Brooklyn Public Library. This exhibit pays homage to the 39-year career of the Brooklyn-born rapper and music mogul. This presentation was collaboratively crafted by Roc Nation and the Brooklyn Public Library over six months. The surprise exhibit offered an immersive experience for fans, highlighting Jay-Z's contributions to the arts, music industry, and Black culture.



The exterior of the library was adorned with lyrics from Jay-Z's albums, setting the stage for a comprehensive journey through his life and career. The exhibit, presented in four chapters, featured artwork, images, audio, and other inspirations never seen before. Each section of the library building revealed different facets of Jay-Z's journey, including highlights of his music career with works by renowned artists like Henry Taylor and Daniel Arsham.



Photo from The Book of HOV exhibit at the Brooklyn Public Library

Noteworthy installations included Arsham's sculpture "HOV's Hands" in the lobby and Jazz Grant's extensive collage mural in the front entrance. A white room showcased awards and memorabilia from Jay-Z's personal archive, while a blue room immersed visitors in the rapper's quotes and lyrics. This multifaceted exhibit serves as a creative and intricate exploration of the musician, entrepreneur, and philanthropist.

Open to the public until December 4, Jay-Z's birthday, The Book of HOV provided a limited-time opportunity for enthusiasts to delve into the remarkable legacy of this global icon.

The NJLA Library Workers of Color Section works to advocate the recruitment, retention and advancement of minority librarians and staff. To join our section, log into NJLA.org and select our E-list.

Danielle Pitter is a writer on her own website, PoetryBooksYA.com, a graduate student and SC&I assistant at Rutgers University's Master of Information program. Additionally, she is a member of the New Jersey Library Association.

FEATURED PARTNER:

New Jersey Makers Day

by **KATE-LYNN GRIMM**

New Jersey Makers Day is a small (but mighty!) non-profit organization that started in New Jersey libraries. Celebrating its 10th year this March, New Jersey Makers Day has registered sites in all 21 New Jersey counties. These sites host events to celebrate hands-on making and learning opportunities.

If your library or organization is not already registered for New Jersey Makers Day 2024, what are you waiting for? It is free to register and we encourage you to design an event that works for your community. Registered sites get access to perks such as: mini-grants, free professional development, networking opportunities, and more. Although the mini-grant deadline has passed, our stacked professional development calendar is just kicking off. We hope you will take advantage of these awesome perks!

- Maker Supply Shop & Show and Share (co-presented with Library Link NJ): January 9th at the Cherry Hill Public Library- registration currently open for registered sites
- Workshop with Liberty Science Center, January 25th at the Liberty Science Center- registration full
- Introduction to Laser Cutting with the Glowforge at Bergen Makerspace, February 15th at the Bergen Makerspace- registration currently open for registered sites
- Tinkering with Purpose: How to Develop a More Intentional Tinkering Practice with Exploratorium, February 27th on Zoom- registration currently open for registered sites



Registration links for these exciting opportunities are sent out to site coordinators. If another staff member at your library is a coordinator, ask them to pass it along.

New Jersey Makers Day 2024 will be held March 15-17, 2024. Thank you for your support through 10 years of making!

Kate-Lynn Grimm is the current president of New Jersey Makers Day, and has been involved with the organization since 2018. She is also a Teen Services Librarian at the Piscataway Public Library.

GRL PWR.

Free Period Kits Initiative

by LAURA CURRY



Bound Brook Memorial Library's YA librarian Laura Curry is spearheading the GRL PWR. period kit initiative, which supports menstruating tweens and teens in the community by offering free period product kits. These kits make sure that teens have what they need during menstruation, while empowering them and combating period poverty. Laura is using this as an opportunity to fight against period stigma by including empowering stickers, candy, calming tea, electrolyte drink mix, and fidget toys, along with the period products, cleansing wipes, and a period guide.

Somerset County Youth Council, I Support the Girls, and the Somerset County 4-H Senior Council made these kits a reality. These organizations ran successful period product donation drives in spring 2023 to aid the cause. Patrons and the community have received the GRL PWR. initiative with much enthusiasm, and those who are involved in local organizations are excited to host their own period product drives to support GRL PWR.

Laura has given out 65 kits since June 2023, and feedback on the kits has ranged from "You don't know how much I've needed one of these!" to "Can I take extras for my besties?" The positive responses reinforce that GRL PWR. kits are fulfilling a need in the community for period products and female empowerment. Now, the goal is to expand the initiative within the community by working with more local organizations, visiting the middle schools and high schools to spread awareness, and offering the kits at outreach events.

Laura Curry is currently working as a Young Adult Librarian at Somerset County Library System's Bound Brook branch. She has been working in NJ libraries since 2011 and holds a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science from Rutgers University.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

NJLA Vice President, Jeff Cupo



Those who know me know I have two passions: history and philosophy. As such, I was poking around some old photos related to my library the other day, and I happened upon one taken of our first downtown branch, opened in 1910 to serve our working class neighborhoods. The sign out front had emblazoned on it: "Circulating Library & Cigars." Circulation skyrocketed at this branch, and the Board used the success to request additional funding from Carnegie to build a new downtown branch in addition to the main branch.

You can't argue with results, right? I think you can. Sure, the cigars might've been getting people in the doors, but that may not be the best way to go about it. Elizabeth Public Library has been progressive going all the way back to our first director, who opened that branch, but they still didn't know better.

So I have to ask, what practices do we do now that, however valuable they may seem, will be seen as clearly immoral, perhaps laughably so, in the future? Late fines? Permanent address requirements for library cards? Anything else that may not seem so obvious?



The first downtown branch of the Elizabeth Public Library

History and philosophy are mirrors, the former shows us who we are, and the latter, who we should be. Let us learn from the past, and reason ourselves to a better future.

Jeff Cupo serves as the Head of Information and Adult Services at Elizabeth Public Library. He manages EPL's Health and Wellness Station, which provides free life-saving items, including Narcan, condoms, feminine hygiene products, socks, etc. He led EPL in becoming one of the first libraries in NJ to hire a social worker, and the only library in the country to offer lockers for homeless patrons to store their possessions. Jeff also runs a monthly Homeless Focus Group for housing-insecure patrons to share ways the library can better serve them. As NJLA Vice President, Jeff hopes to make practices like these more widespread, and is more than happy to help anyone get started.

LIBRARY CARD SIGN-UP MONTH

New Jersey Library Card Project

by **LIZETTE MELENDEZ**

This year, for Library Card Sign-Up Month, I was inspired to utilize the national theme of Disney's Elemental and a post on the Facebook page Library Think Tank.

A Library Think Tank colleague was doing a display of library cards from around the country. I combined both inspirations and came up with the display of only NJ Library cards.



Lizette Melendez-Villegas, Library Assistant, in front of the NJ Library Cards Display

Besides putting a request on NJLA for library cards, I visited my local libraries for library card donations. I enjoyed meeting library colleagues from the local region and getting tours of their their library. My library patrons and staff enjoyed the display.



NJ Library Cards Display with Elemental Poster



Library patrons checking out the NJ Library Cards Displays.

Lizette Melendez-Villegas is a Library Assistant in South Jersey, and a "Volunteer Extraordinaire," volunteering for close to 40 years at local literacy projects. She is the host of the Latino Library Staff Meetup through MentorNJ/LibraryLinkNJ.

2024 – 2025



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!

EQUITY SCHOLARSHIPS

In partnership with the New Jersey State Library, Library Link NJ, and Rutgers University, NJLA will provide scholarships in the amount of \$8,500 to be used for the Fall Semester (September 2024) and the Winter/Spring semester (January 2025). These awards intend to increase equity and diversity in the recruitment and retention of library workers in the state of New Jersey who identify as American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Middle Eastern, North African, and/or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Equity Scholarship winners will also receive opportunities for professional development via a two-year complimentary NJLA Membership and two years of complimentary attendance to the NJLA Conference!

Applicable candidates are eligible to be awarded both an Equity and a Course scholarship.



COURSE SCHOLARSHIPS

Any LIS student enrolled or accepted into an accredited LIS program and who works/lives/or attends graduate school in New Jersey is eligible to apply. These scholarships are meant to cover the cost of one course and will be awarded in the amount of \$3,750.

Applications open January 1st at:
<https://www.njla.org/scholarship>
Questions?

Email: scholarshipnjla@gmail.com

Applications due by:
March 15, 2024

- STUDENTS - Join NJLA through ALA & have access to -
- Membership in both the national and New Jersey Library Associations for the low price of \$46
 - Discounts on NJLA events
 - Networking with future colleagues
 - Access to ALA activities, including committee work, conferences, and programs.

VISIT.ALA.ORG TO JOIN!

PEOPLE AND PLACES

SaraBeth Coyle was promoted from PT Library Assistant to PT Reference Librarian at the Margaret E. Heggan Free Public Library in Sewell, NJ as of November 2023.

Susan Clarkin Vignuolo is a Teen Services Librarian at the Piscataway Public Library, as of early October 2023.

Nadine Giron is the Supervising Librarian for Adult Services at the Piscataway Public Library.

Kelly Shesko is a full time Adult Services Librarian at the Cherry Hill Public Library as of October 23, 2023.

Ashley Mitchell, Adult Services Librarian at Camden County Library System, has been selected as an ALA Emerging Leader. She says, "I am deeply honored to be selected as an ALA Emerging Leader. I'm excited to network and collaborate with library workers from around the country (and Canada). This program will give me the opportunity to make an impact on the library world in a major way. I hope to join an ALA division or committee that will support my passion for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all libraries!"

Have a job change, retirement, or announcement to share?

Email newsletter_editor@njlamembers.org
to have it included in our next issue!

