

# NJLA NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW JERSEY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

October 2023

Vol. 21 Issue 4

## Important Dates

### AI Ambassadors Four-Day Series: Building Expertise and Engagement in Libraries

Thursdays at 8 a.m.

October 19, October 26, November 2,  
November 16.

### Northeast Summit on Climate Adaptation for Library Facilities

Wednesday, November 8  
9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

### NJASL Conference

Sunday, December 3 - Tuesday, December 5

### Youth Services Forum

Tuesday, December 12, 8 a.m.

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

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **Carina Gonzalez**

My first few months as NJLA President have been delightfully informative. Just when I think I have been acquainted with all of the services and opportunities that NJLA provides, I learn something else.

For example, did you know that if you are employed through an organization that is an Enhanced Institutional Member of the NJLA, that you are an NJLA member too? This means you have all of the perks of NJLA membership including continuing education, scholarships, and leadership opportunities. Spread this information to your colleagues that aren't involved in NJLA yet.

Exciting changes like these happen because you, our members, are always striving to improve your service. This year has already brought about the formation of five new sections: Circulation & Access Services, PR & Marketing, Retired Members, Social Work, and Technical Services & Collection Development. The requests for sections like these are a direct reflection of NJLA's commitment to serve all of our members, not just public librarians. I wish these new sections the best, and look forward to all they will accomplish.

Another incoming initiative is how we are funding the work of our NJLA sections and committees. Each section and committee has \$200 available that they can request for their use. If additional funds are needed, we have a new competitive grant opportunity due to a generous bequest from NJLA Past President Learned T. "Dag" Bulman. NJLA is offering annual awards up to a maximum of \$750 per committee or section. We are still working out the details, but keep an eye on your email for more information.

**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](http://www.librariancarina.com).**

# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by **BRETT BONFIELD**

I have the pleasure of sharing important, exciting news. In the next few weeks, we are adding two full-time employees, Katy White as NJLA's Associate Director and Alicia Gough as NJLA's Office Manager.

Katy has served libraries throughout her 25-year career, first as Program Officer at Friends of Libraries USA (now United for Libraries, a division of ALA), followed by her library service consultant roles at Baker & Taylor and Gale, and most recently at Brodart, as director of Marketing and Product Development for McNaughton Subscription Services.



Katy will work closely with NJLA's individual and institutional members throughout the year to ensure they are getting the most from their NJLA membership, especially their involvement in NJLA sections. She will also help ensure that NJLA's Annual Conference and other professional development activities meet library staff members' evolving needs. "I spent 15 years consulting with libraries across New Jersey, getting to know staff members at every level of the organization so I could understand their workflows and needs," Katy told me. "I'm eager to support NJLA members in this challenging yet exciting time for libraries."

Katy lives with her husband and son in Plainsboro, where she serves as Secretary for the Library Board of Trustees.

Alicia Gough has been an integral part of the NJLA team since 2021, where she began serving as NJLA's Web and Tech Specialist. Her diverse background includes positions as a personal assistant, graphic designer, web designer, researcher, production assistant, and booking agent. She has a bachelor's degree from Stockton University.

Beyond her professional commitments, Alicia is an active volunteer with Camden County LandSAR (Search and Rescue) and the Camden County Community Emergency Response Team. Her hobbies include yoga, rucking, cooking, and video games.

NJLA has maintained a spare staffing mode for quite some time, so having three full-time employees represents a significant increase in our capacity to serve your needs. This is made possible, and also necessitated, by our dramatic membership increase over the past 18 months. My hope is that we will continue to add more staff in order to provide you with the resources, structure, and opportunities you expect from your statewide professional association.

**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](mailto:newsletter_editorenjlamembers.org)**

Proposals for the Winter 2023 issue are due on November 13th.

# HOW TO BE PREPARED AND PROACTIVE IN DEFENDING INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

by ALLEN McGINLEY

Efforts to control, suppress, and censor books and texts have existed nearly as long as written words themselves. Books have been censored for political, religious, sexual, and social reasons, among others.

While assuredly not the first, one of the earliest examples I've run

across is from 303 A.D. when the Ancient Romans began a ritualized destruction of Christian texts. Christianity was then a smaller, but still growing, organized religion which the Romans perceived as a threat to their power and control. This event is known as The Great Persecution and continued for years.

Censorship efforts seem to wax and wane, but it is unlikely that the efforts of a vocal few to control the rights and freedoms of a vast majority will go away any time soon. For those who seek to control ideas and attitudes in our society, an institution that provides free and equitable access to information is perhaps the greatest threat of all.

I think the best strategy for public libraries is to assume the library's materials will be challenged at some point, take appropriate steps to be prepared, and be proactive in educating their community about the importance of intellectual freedom.

## Be Prepared

Every public library should have a board-approved collection development policy that is updated on a regular basis. When it comes to the materials that are added and removed from public libraries, the collection development policy sets forth the core principles. This policy should document how materials are selected and deselected, as well as the library's process for handling material challenges.

Like the checks and balances on our federal government, this process is a critical part of



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what makes public libraries such a valuable democratic institution. A collection development policy that cannot sustain an intellectual freedom challenge is not a good policy.

It may be tempting to hope for the best and not include a process for challenges, but it only takes one individual in your community to raise concerns about a book in your collection. You want to make sure that the library and its experts are outlining the procedure for reconsideration.

Defending the core value of intellectual freedom and resisting all efforts to censor library resources is a challenge that all public libraries must be prepared for.

### **Be Proactive**

There are a variety of ways in which a library's Board of Trustees can be proactive in asserting this responsibility, including: adopting the Library Bill of Rights or the Freedom to Read Statement, passing a resolution outlining the library's opposition to censorship and book bans, or affirming the library as a book sanctuary.

Libraries should also look for ways to educate residents and support intellectual freedom in their regular program offerings. Hosting a banned book discussion group or a workshop about book banning is a great way to bring these conversations out into the open.

Censorship is much more successful when there is a lack of education around intellectual freedom. This gives would-be censors the opportunity to sensationalize language, while silencing controversial ideas. It should be every library's responsibility to educate their community about the importance of the right to read, as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

This may not be a fight that most library workers signed up for, but it's a challenge that goes right to the heart of our democratic ideals. A majority of Americans profess to support equal access to information and free expression of ideas. This makes it critical for our public libraries to continue educating our communities and taking the lead in protecting this essential American freedom.

**Allen McGinley (he/him) is the Director of Westfield Memorial Library in Union County, and a consultant for Library Crossroads, LLC. He is the current Treasurer of New Jersey Makers Day, a member of the LMxAC Executive Board, and a former member of the NJLA Executive Board.**

# CODE BLUE/CODE RED AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

by **LARISSA BROOKES**

Public libraries can help New Jersey counties meet their responsibilities under the “Code Blue” law and help minimize hypothermia-related death and injury. While libraries don’t offer a complete solution, we can use our strengths and flexibility to help keep vulnerable people safe.

## Code Blue

New Jersey’s “Code Blue” law, passed in 2017 and expanded in 2020, requires that every NJ county:

- Have warming centers for vulnerable people
- Notify vulnerable people of these warming centers

Notifications must reach the county’s “municipalities, social service agencies, and non-profit organizations that provide services to at-risk individuals,” so long as each such municipality has at least 10 people experiencing homelessness. (N.J. Statutes § App. A:9-43.19)

A Code Blue alert allows at-risk people to rest in a warming center until the Code Blue ends. The warming center could be a municipal building, a senior center, a public library, or other building; they do not have to provide beds.



*Pine Barrens wildfires closed much of the Garden State Parkway during this year’s NJLA conference. Photograph New Jersey Forest Fire Service (Facebook page).*



**Ocean County Department of Human Services  
Code Blue Announcement for February 3 - 7**

*Graphic that the Ocean County Library used on its website to announce a Code Blue.*

*Image courtesy of the Ocean County Library.*

A forecasted temperature of or below 32° F or a wind-chill temperature of zero degrees or less for a period of two hours or more will trigger a Code Blue. Each county determines who its coordinator is and how the coordinator will contact relevant local organizations.

## Code Red

New Jersey has not enacted Code Red legislation, but state Assembly and Senate bills each propose a three-year Code Red pilot. These bills require

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counties to take Code-Blue-type action when temperatures are projected to reach 95° to 99° for at least two consecutive days or 100° to 104° for any length of time.

The bills do not address the Air Quality Index, though the number of poor-air-quality days will increase as our planet heats. This past summer, public health officials urged people to avoid going outside unless necessary; not everyone can work or shelter indoors during high AQI periods.

### **How Public Libraries Can Help**

Almost every public library already serves as an unofficial warming and cooling center. To help at-risk people during weather emergencies, we can:

- Temporarily loosen conduct rules, like allowing children to be with their adults in a (usually) quiet area
- Broadcast information about Code Blue (and Code Red, if enacted), alerting people who are at risk and helping them find refuge when the library is closed
- Partner, formally or informally, with volunteer and non-profit organizations that work with vulnerable people
- Identify ourselves as warming and/or cooling centers with the relevant county office of emergency management
- Notify staff members (and security officers, if any) whenever a Code Blue has been issued and display the notice on homepages
- Register our libraries as cooling and/or warming centers with the county office of emergency management, giving at least two library contacts
- Subscribe to NGO mailing lists that serve needs related to Code Blue and Code Red
- Check NJ211.org\* [cooling centers](#) and [warming centers](#)

The last three recommendations come from Elizabeth Cronin, information services coordinator for the Ocean County Library. Her library receives Code Blue alerts, which include a list of warming centers, from Ocean County Human Services. The library encourages staff members to share this list with anyone they think could use the services.

Cronin emphasizes that libraries can share information about warming centers whether or not an official Code Blue has been called.

### **Limitations**

In a Code Blue event, libraries' limited hours mean that buildings are closed overnight, when a Code Blue event likely reaches its lowest temperatures. Many buildings have old and unreliable HVAC systems that sometimes fail, forcing the library to close until the

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system is working again, further limiting their service.

For example, Hurricane Sandy exposed our limitations during or after extreme weather events. Many libraries lost power. In some cases, staff members managed without power and some without their homes, navigating streets with downed power cables and other hazards. Extreme weather harms everyone, though it threatens vulnerable populations the most.

Sandy also demonstrated though how libraries and staff can rapidly adapt to serving very different community needs than the ones we typically address. Despite the power outages, property destruction, general upheaval, and other problems, library staffers did their best to stay open and help their communities.

Library staff are human and vulnerable to extreme weather, just as our community members are. We have families, pets, and health conditions that are harmed by these weather events. We need to care for ourselves and for others.

\*NJ211.org is the state-wide information and referral website operated by the United Way of New Jersey. It posts Code Blue and Code Red alerts, along with warming and cooling center addresses, hours, and contact information. The United Way is currently updating the NJ211.org directory.

**Larissa Brookes is a librarian at Ridgewood Public Library. She holds an MLIS from San José State University School of Library and Information Science and is president of the Sustainability and Resilience Section, which she invites everyone to join. Her email address is [lbrookes@ridgewoodlibrary.org](mailto:lbrookes@ridgewoodlibrary.org).**

## SECTION SPOTLIGHT: ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

by **AMANDA EIGEN**

Want to get involved in NJLA but not sure how to start? New to management and need some support? Want to hear what's happening at other libraries across the state? Want to get involved with Conference? The NJLA Administration and Management Section is a great section for all this and more!

The Administration and Management Section supports and engages our members who supervise staff at any level and/or manage operations across all types of libraries.



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We meet monthly, usually via Zoom, and have developed a format that works well for everyone and keeps us learning! Each month we invite a speaker to address a topic relevant to our Section members. In October, NJLA Executive Director Brett Bonfield will join us to talk about the work he and the NJLA staff are doing. Future topics include the State Aid Survey, Construction Project Management, and MentorNJ. We also hear reports from members who serve on other committees, as well as liaisons to other groups relevant to our own. And, of course, we develop and sponsor sessions and poster sessions for the NJLA Conference.

For Conference 2023, we sponsored or co-sponsored seven sessions, including Don't Stop at Hiring: How (and why) to retain and promote BIPOC library workers (co-sponsored with Diversity & Outreach Section, Library Workers of Color, Urban Libraries Section), Materials Challenges: A guided discussion for library directors and trustees who want to proactively support Intellectual Freedom, New Managers/Administrators: All of Your Questions Answered! and Starting an Internship Program at Your Library: Creating opportunities for future Information Professionals (co-sponsored with Diversity & outreach Section, Small Libraries Section).

Please reach out if you have any questions about the Administration and Management Section, and please consider joining us!

**Amanda Eigen began working part-time at the Maplewood Memorial library in 2004, where she is now the Assistant Director. Over the years, Amanda has served as Media Coordinator, Hilton Branch Librarian, and Head of Circulation and Technical Services. Amanda graduated Cum Laude from Washington University in St. Louis, and received her MLIS from Rutgers University.**

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## FEATURED PARTNER

### NJASL and NLJA Regional Response Team

by **CATHY DeCAMPLI, KATHLEEN DiGIULIO, AIDAN FLAX-CLARK, and AMY PENWELL**

With book challenges and other intellectual freedom issues increasing, the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) and NJLA created the Regional Response Team to protect the right to read. The Rapid Response team is composed of school and public librarians across the state who are willing to get involved on a local level to help preserve intellectual freedom, school and public librarianship, and school and public library positions.

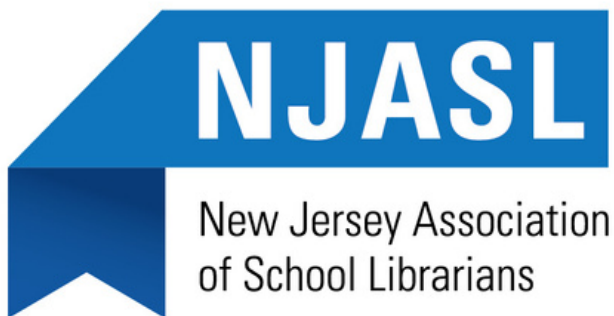
Join us! The current landscape can make it hard to know how to get involved, but censors

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don't go away on their own. Joining the Regional Response Team is one way to support freedom to read! Fill out the form at [bit.ly/librrt](https://bit.ly/librrt) or email us at [rrt@njasl.org](mailto:rrt@njasl.org) to join. It takes many people making many statements to make it clear that the censorship attempts are due to a small group of outspoken people with extremely narrow viewpoints. These people use words like "protect" and "rights," but they're not interested in protecting the rights of anybody who doesn't share their views.

If you or your library is experiencing a challenging circumstance, whether it's a book challenge or a funding threat, the Regional Response Team can help! From connecting you with resources and organizations, like the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey (ACLU-NJ), to issuing letters of support, to organizing attendance at your next board meeting, it's always better to fight censorship together. Email [rrt@njasl.org](mailto:rrt@njasl.org), or call the NJLA Office at 609-482-1282 to request assistance.



**Cathy DeCampi works at the Haddonfield Public Library. She is also President of NJLA's Technology Section.**

**Kathleen DiGiulio has worked at the Piscataway Public Library since 2017. She also sits on the board of the New Jersey Abortion Access Fund.**

**Aidan Flax-Clark is the Director of LIVE from NYPL at the New York Public Library. He lives in West Orange, NJ.**

**Amy Penwell is a School Library Media Specialist in Burlington County. She shares her love of reading and technology with students from PreK through 8th grade, and is committed to students' right to read.**

# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

## at Pennsauken Free Public Library

by **ALISON BOZIC**

Pennsauken Free Public Library honored Hispanic Heritage Month with programs and resources throughout late September and early October. Interactive displays in all areas of the library promoted books, DVDs and CDs for all ages by Hispanic and Latinx creators, as well as the library's newly expanded Multilingual Collection, which includes a variety of new Spanish language titles for children, teens, and adults. The display case in the library's lobby featured textile and ceramic art from Latin America, vintage postcards, and other ephemera.



Since 2019 the library has hosted a festival in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month. This year, events were held all month long, offering multiple opportunities for community members to celebrate Hispanic heritage and recognize the contributions of Hispanic and Latinx Americans. This series of special family-friendly programs included: a Family Movie Night screening of *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, starring Mile Morales, an evening bilingual family storytime, a cooking demonstration in partnership with the Food Bank of South Jersey, and a Salsa Class taught by Universal Ballroom's Sandra Fortuna.

The celebrations throughout the month engaged patrons of all ages and provided opportunities to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month as a community.

**Alison Kelly Bozic (she/her) is the Program and Outreach Coordinator at Pennsauken Free Public Library. She holds an MLIS from UCLA and has worked in both school and public libraries.**



# BACK TO SCHOOL WITH ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

## Camden County College

by **LORRAINE SMITH**

This past Spring, Camden County College hosted a soft opening of its newly-created Student Learning Center in Room 508 of College Hall on the Camden campus. The Center consists of a spacious, well-lit room with desktop computers, printing, study tables, and soft seating, as well as a smaller adjacent room for quiet study and group instruction sessions.

The purpose of the Center is to provide Camden County College students with a place to consult with tutors on a variety of subjects, get research and citation help from a librarian, attend online classes using library equipment, and study as a group or individually. In addition to research and citation assistance, librarians are also loaning out course textbooks and headphones for student use within the Center. Information literacy instruction sessions are also being provided in cooperation with Bart Everts at Robeson Library on Rutgers University's Camden campus.

The Center is already proving to be an essential resource for Camden County College students on the Camden campus, seeing consistent traffic throughout the day from both new and returning students. As awareness of this new resource grows on the Camden campus, we anticipate robust increases in student traffic and activity within the Center in future semesters.



**Lorraine Smith is a Collection Development Librarian at Camden County College in Blackwood and Camden.**

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## NJLA SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

### SLOANE KAZIM

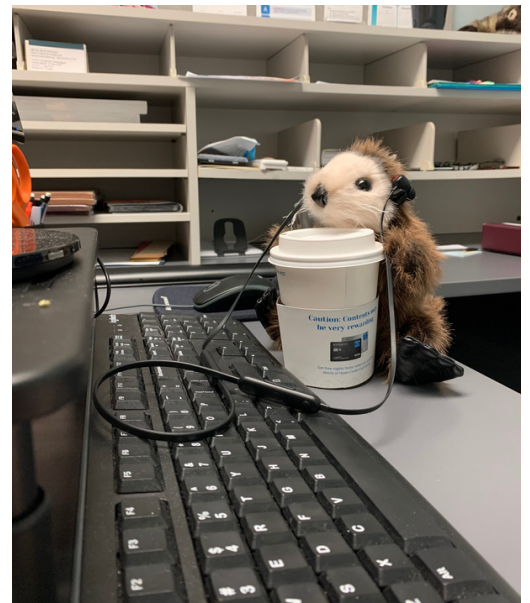


Sloane Kazim (they/them) currently works at the Montgomery and Mary Jacobs Neighborhood Library branches of the Somerset County Library System as a youth services library assistant. In their five year career in public libraries, they have worked in passport services, volunteer services, and staffed adult and youth reference desks of small and large libraries. They have a passion for performing storytimes with their partner in crime, Oliver the Otter, and creating engaging displays with themes spanning from banned books to current TikTok trends.

Sloane is completing their MLIS at the University of Alabama, where their studies have focused on youth services, social justice within libraries, fandoms, and technological advancements in libraries. This semester, they are most excited about taking "AI in Society," which focuses on the social, political, labor, and environmental impacts of AI technology.

Sloane was a 2022 recipient of the NJLA Course Scholarship and has since joined the Young Adult Services Section. They have participated in reading and deliberating for the 29th NJLA Garden State Teen Book Awards and have helped compile the list for the 30th.

They thank NJLA and the members they have met for helping them in the beginning stages of their library career.



*Oliver the Otter.*

# NEW JERSEY WAS IN “HOUSE”

by TONYA GARCIA

**EDITOR’S NOTE: The Long Branch Free Public Library was one of eight recipients of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. This prestigious honor is issued by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Library Director Tonya Garcia tells us about her experience accepting the award.**



What a day it was! The magnitude of walking into the White House was not lost on me. Receiving the medal from First Lady Jill Biden and Crosby Kemper, IMLS Director was surreal. Being accompanied by library icons such as Tracie Hall, American Library Association Executive Director, Brett Bonfield, NJLA Director and Jennifer Nelson, New Jersey State Librarian made it even more special.



*Tonya Garcia and Executive Director Brett Bonfield at the White House.*

The day was not about personal recognition; it was about the vital contributions of libraries and their staff. Therefore, while I may have accepted the award, it was unquestionably my staff who believed in our vision and made it happen! Not to be called trailblazers or rock stars, but rather to represent libraries any chance we get.

Opportunities such as this, only motivate us to continue. Not to collect trophies, but because we know that all too often, libraries are forgotten and we know the importance of making sure we are not. Libraries reflect the best of civility and democracy, teaching us who

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we are and who we can be. Anytime the word library is uttered, there is an opportunity to teach this lesson.

Hard times for libraries are here again. What we will need is a collective sense of teamwork from all New Jersey libraries. We need to be on the same team so we can face challenges and surmount others' inability to be flexible of mind. At Long Branch, we strive to offer hope. Walking into the White House, as a teen mother who dropped out of high school, certainly reflected the fulfillment of that very desire.

**Tonya Garcia is the director of the Long Branch Free Public Library in Long Branch. She has written numerous publications such as the recently published *No Time for This and Hispanic Heritage: Pathways to Influence on American Society*. She was elected 2019 NJLA President, and was a recipient of several honors including the 2016 NJLA Librarian of the Year, Library Journal Mover and Shaker, the Key to the City of Long Branch and had days in both Monmouth County and Long Branch named in her honor. She is also a survivor, just months after being elected NJLA president she was diagnosed with breast cancer. This portion of her life is now documented in her newly published book. Her email is [tgarcia@longbranchlib.org](mailto:tgarcia@longbranchlib.org).**

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





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## PEOPLE AND PLACES

As of August 2023, **Jen Gheller** is the new Teen Librarian at the Elizabeth Public Library.

As of September 11, 2023, **Danielle Pitter** will be starting her new job as Program Assistant at Rutgers University's LIS department.

As of October 10, 2023, **Erica Moon** will begin her new position as Head of Youth Services at the Cherry Hill Public Library.

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

Email [newsletter\\_editor@njlamembers.org](mailto:newsletter_editor@njlamembers.org)  
to have it included in our next issue!

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## SHARE YOUR STORY!

The NJLA Public Relations Committee is looking to spotlight New Jersey libraries through the [I Love NJ Libraries](#) platform. We need your help! We are requesting library workers send a few short paragraphs, accompanied by pictures, to be featured on our I Love NJ Libraries blog. We are looking for any success stories you are willing to share such as: a positive interaction with a patron, a new change that has benefited your library staff or patrons, or a staff member you'd like to highlight. Please fill out [this form](#) and someone from the NJLA PR Committee will be in touch.

Looking for other ways to share what amazing programs, events, and services your library is offering? Share your photos through your own social media accounts #ILoveNJLibraries Don't forget to tag us @LoveNJLibraries on Facebook and Instagram!