

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.