

## Local librarian wins esteemed ‘I Love My Librarian’ award

Written by By Rachelle Nones Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 28 January 2022 07:33

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### An out-of-the-box librarian who sees the library as the community

Within its walls, Gallup's Octavia Fellin Public Library has long provided a community space for its patrons to perform research, study, check out the latest bestseller, and participate in the library's numerous events and programs. During the last five years, OFPL Director Tammi Moe's leadership has boosted the library's sponsored program attendance by offering inclusive culturally-relevant programming presented at the town's movie theatre, community fairs, and at various public events.

In recognition of Moe's successful expansion of public access to programs focused upon important issues impacting Gallup's large Native American population, Moe has been awarded the American Library Association's I Love My Librarian Award for 2022. Candidates for the award are nominated by the library's users.

"It really means a great deal to me that I have been recognized by the community here," Moe said. "It does speak volumes for the connections that have been able to be made and that I am actually serving this community the way that I should."

Moe told the *Sun* that when she initially started working at the library approximately five years ago, its program delivery was more traditional.

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"The previous directors, in their minds, everything had to happen in the library," she explained. "They were relegated to making the library their tool."

"I'm completely the opposite, I see that the walls of the library should not be a barrier for people to participate and access our system," Moe said. "I see the library as the community—serving the community where they're at—as opposed to saying you have to come into the library to benefit from what we're doing."

Under her guidance, OFPL has presented programs addressing issues specific to the residents of Gallup. One focused on The UNC Church Rock uranium mill spill, a dam breach causing uranium waste and radioactive water to contaminate the Navajo Nation's land and water sources.

"It was worse than Three Mile Island and they cleaned up Three Mile Island, but here they really didn't," she said. "There is a lot of uranium poisoning here in this area and a lot of studies done on how that has adversely affected their health."

OFPL has presented programs on the incarceration of Native Indian American activist Leonard Peltier and the forced sterilization of Indigenous women by the United States government

"We have a community member here," she said. "Her name is Jean Whitehorse."

"She was actually a victim of that forced sterilization," she continued. "We've done a number of programs with her."

"There was a movie made, called *Amá* about her and two other Indigenous women's lives and what happened when that took place," Moe said. "It wasn't long ago that it happened."

"I think people don't realize how many different problems that Indigenous people face."

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Moe looks forward to the day when construction begins on the new library that has been in the planning stages for several years. The current OFPL library, which is a municipal library, has outgrown its physical space.

"Here, they really use the library heavily," she emphasized. "We are talking over 200,000 visitors a year to the library.

"The collections have very high circulations."

At the present time, the design concept for the new library has not yet been perfected.

"We can't pursue a funding source until the design concept is ready to go," Moe told the *Sun*. "Depending on how long it takes to get that funding to come in here, it could be two to three years before they break ground on that library."

The Library Advisory Board has been given strict parameters regarding the new library's location in Downtown Gallup.

"We're aiming for a 55,000 square foot library with room for growth and space around it for outdoor programming with plenty of parking," Moe said.

Moe's hope is that the new library fully addresses the needs of the people.

"What do they see their library as being?" she questioned. "It can be a multipurpose building.

"There is a stereotype that persists in regard to libraries as quiet spaces where introverts come

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to read,” she pointed out. “But the truth is community members want a conversation with other community members.

“A safe place where ideas can be shared and people will actually listen,” she said. “That is what we strive for at the Octavia Fellin Public Library.”

### ***CELEBRATE TAMMIE MOE’S AWARD***

Each honoree of the prestigious annual award, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, receives a \$5,000 cash award and a \$750 donation to the library or institution where they work.

The I Love My Librarian award winners will be honored at the ALA’s 2020 virtual LibLearnX: The Library Learning Experience conference.

***To tune into the ALA’s 2022 virtual award ceremony streaming live at 2:30 p.m. MST on Jan. 22, Visit:***

<https://www.youtube.com/user/AmLibraryAssociation> .

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