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Leadership Counts

I have written in this column before about the urgent need for Libraries to remain relevant in a society that seems to grow its figurative bandwidth with every new electronic device advance. I have not written before about the one WLN Library Director who, in her own quiet way, has been a consistent leader for pushing forward. She is Jamie Faló, currently Library Director at Greensburg Hempfield Area Library (GHAL).

Jamie was first a Library Director at Mt. Pleasant Public Library, and then became Director at Murrysville Community Library (MCL) from 2011 to 2018. Thereafter, she moved to the GHAL. It is as MCL Library Director that I, as Board Trustee, first came to work with her and know her. There is a lot to tell, especially about how she, without much advance STEM preparation, became a STEM literacy proponent and leader within the Westmoreland Library Network.

As first of two examples, in 2014 we introduced what later became known as Storytime STEM-packs™, in collaboration with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit Math & Science Collaborative (AIU MSC). Storytime STEM-packs is first of all a training program for Library staff, so that staff can conduct Common Core State Standards(CCSS)/Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)-based children's programming, just as in schools. I have written about this previously.

Jamie's commitment to the project was a big part of the success of this effort, as is evident by her being one of the several collaborating authors for our peer-reviewed, published article entitled "CCSS/NGSS Pilot for Library Summer Reading Club: Informal K-8 STEM Learning as a Bridge for Formal Scholastic Learning." It was published in Science Education and Civic Engagement: an International Journal, V. 7(1), Winter 2015. It was then that she gave the poster presentation of the work at the first ever "Public Libraries & STEM: a National Conference on Current Trends and Future Directions," August 2015 in Denver. Not often does a Library Director, or any staff member, earn the opportunity to be on a national stage in this way. Jamie did.

The second example is her 2022 co-leadership with Denni Grassel, recently retired Library Director at Delmont Public Library, to build a Library resource center for Digital Literacy/STEM and workforce development. She was all in for the four successful grant applications for 2022-23 to support this programming, even as it became evident to her that grant success is going to tax her existing staff programming capacity. This effort is leading to new programming as I write.

The collaborative Storytime STEM-packs project of 2014 grew over time to include aspects of digital literacy in the form of age-appropriate robots and young children learning algorithms (STEM-packs+C), thanks to the AIU MSC. In that way, there is actually a continuum of Library programming into the new 2022-23 digital literacy initiative, rather than a gap between two projects. So, it is not with any stretch that I can say that Greensburg Hempfield Area Library, under Jamie's leadership, has kept to a

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mission of leadership that she began in Murrysville, especially for children, to meet the needs of the changing world. And this STEM/Digital Literacy focus is one of the most important new initiatives that I think has taken place in the WLN in recent years. Thank you Jamie.

Charles B. Greenberg,
Board Director, Murrysville Community Library Foundation