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## **Libraries Transforming Communities**

“Libraries Transforming Communities (LTC): Accessible Small and Rural Communities” is a grant offered this year by the American Library Association (ALA), Public Programs Office. Small and rural Libraries are defined as those in communities of less than 25,000 population and not less than five miles from an urban area. Delmont Public Library (DPL) meets those requirements, and in response to its formal application for funding, it was successful in receiving one of the 240 awards granted nationally. The award was just granted at the end of April.

This is one of four awards received recently by DPL for a particular project initiative that has been described in this column as a Public Resource Center for people on the autism or neurodivergent spectrum; two are through the ALA (about the second next time). The two other generous funders are the Community Foundation of Murrysville, Export and Delmont and the Eden Hall Foundation.

DPL and Greensburg Hempfield Area Library (GHAL) are actually paired up for two Public Resource Centers since the beginning of 2022, the other being Digital Literacy and Workforce Development, each taking leadership depending on circumstances. The present subject, the Public Resource Center for library users on the autism spectrum, is the creative brainchild of Monica Smodic, new Library Director at DPL. She introduced herself to you on these pages last January 9, under the article title “My First Love.”

DPL intends to promote and make accessible informed resource guides, and to host professionally certified programs around them. The offerings will include books, videos, and other materials that will be shared with participants. The project has two committed partners. They are: (1) East Suburban Citizen Advocacy Inc. [<https://eastsuburbancitizenadvocacy.org>]; and (2) Inclusive Connections [<https://www.inclusiveconnections.org>]. East Suburban’s mission is “to provide advocacy and to build inclusive opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.” Inclusive Connections’ mission includes “to provide a safe space for families to connect to each other and the community they live in. We seek to find the best solutions and resources to help the autistic community feel welcome throughout all of Westmoreland County.”

What is key about awards such as “Libraries Transforming Communities” is the overarching support and peer-group structure that comes with the award. “Grantor provides: professional development, resources, and project support; 4-6 hour e-course training at the outset after grant is awarded.” Importantly, being a grantee participant is clearly more than just about receiving the monetary award. It is about upward growth of the receiving organization, the Library, into new partnerships and community services.

In the words of the sponsoring American Library Association: ““Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities” is part of ALA’s longtime commitment to preparing library workers for the expanding role of libraries.”

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Congratulations to DPL for becoming a part of ALA's "Libraries Transforming Communities" team. It is a high honor to have been selected and an important responsibility.

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