



I Love My  
Librarian!  
2013 Award

**Nominations for: Holly L. Camino**

Manager

Buckeye Library, Medina County District Library  
Medina, Ohio

**Nominator: John McCullough**

**1. Please tell us in 2-3 sentences why your nominee should win this award. What sets him/her apart?**

Holly Camino and the staff of Buckeye Library welcome the dozens of middle school and high school students who overflow into their library every day after school with no where else to go. Busing cuts in our rural community mean seventy to ninety kids are at the library until their working parents can pick them up, and I've been one of them for five years now.

Holly and her staff don't just give us a safe, warm and fun place to go, they make us feel welcome with programs that address our needs, activities that excite and motivate, homework help and general educational enrichment and of course...snacks. That's important!

**2. Please list a few ways in which the nominee has helped you and made your experience of the library a positive one.**

I am a senior in high school but I don't have a car yet and I live out in the country. My mom works full time and busing was cut for middle and high school students five years ago due to school funding shortages.

Since the eighth grade I have been coming to the Buckeye Library after school every day until my mom can pick me up. It's usually about two to three hours every day. Some of these kids stay even later, until almost when the library closes.

Even if I had a car I would probably come here. I would miss coming to a place that is safe, full of activity and where the adults are nice, caring and always ready to help you out.

It's just more fun than being at home.

I am also more focused on studying when I'm here. I get all my homework done, have free access to the Internet and any question I could have the librarians find me the answer. It's like having your own personal study partner who knows all the answers! When I have a project I can work with other people in my grade to get it done and we don't have to meet up on the weekends. Being at the library is like having a handful of moms ready to help you out. Except they are not your mom, they are way cooler. You need a pencil? They have it. Markers? You can borrow theirs. Also, while they are helping you with research projects you are learning from the best so when I go to college I know I will be better at finding information and have better study skills than most others.

I want to be a pediatrician and being at the library has helped me get to the first step of that goal. My grades have improved and stayed steadily strong since coming to the library every day. Those grades will help me get into a good undergraduate program. Also, as I am beginning to apply to

colleges the librarians here have already told me they can help in any way possible. They even know the tricks to grants, financial aid and other ways to help me pay for my education.

All the librarians are great, but it's the positive attitude Holly has towards all of us teens that really makes the difference. As the manager of the library she sets the tone for how we will be received.

That tone has been very welcoming and positive. In fact, as shocking as this was to me, I approached Holly this summer to ask her what would be a good book for me to read just for fun. I have never read a book just for fun. I have completed my required summer reading for English class, but never picked up a book on my own since I was a little kid. She not only helped me pick the best books off my summer reading list, she helped me choose a book to read after I was done with the summer reading that I really liked. I had to go back and tell her about it! She asked me what kind of movies and stories I enjoy and she found a Sci-Fi novel that was fun to read and I really enjoyed.

### **3. How has the librarian made a difference in the community? Please be specific.**

Holly grew up in the Buckeye Schools and is a graduate herself. I think that makes her care even more about the middle and high school kids who come here everyday.

Knowing that we are welcome makes a huge difference to the 70-90 students who come here everyday and their parents who would be worrying about them if the library was not an option for us to hang out in. Our school is in the middle of a corn field on a busy county road that borders a heavily used rail road track. There are no sidewalks. This is not a pedestrian area. I would hate to think what would happen if even those who could walk home on these dangerous roads tried it, and in the winter months, it would be truly hazardous.

Holly did several things that make having all of us in the library a little easier on the other people who want to use the building. While it has become a sort of teen hang out, Holly has found inventive ways to keep us busy and cut down on any trouble that could arise. First, there is now a police officer in the building from the time school lets out until closing. At first it did result in some kids being asked to leave and find another place to go, but that had to happen so the rest of us could enjoy our time here. Since the police officer is the disciplinarian, the librarians can relax and do their jobs and not have to worry about behavior issues. Honestly, the behavior issues are gone. Either those kids shaped up or they didn't return to the library. This makes for a very pleasant, friendly environment for us all.

Holly also didn't try to take all of us on without help. She asked two faith-based volunteer groups to help her out. On Wednesdays one group brought in snacks and games. Fridays were the best. We would have pizza sometimes, play games in the community room so we could be loud and not bother anyone and we sometimes watched movies and they had pop and popcorn for us. One thing that was nice about the Friday group was one of the volunteers was a licensed counselor, so if anyone needed an unbiased ear to listen to a problem they were having, that option was there. Counselors have been cut back dramatically in our schools because of funding so that was a well-thought bonus to our Friday activities. Holly also teamed up with a new group called Feeding Medina County. They brought bread, peanut butter and jelly, granola bars and juice so we could make sandwiches after school on the days the outside groups didn't bring in food. For this year Holly worked with the Friends of the Library to get a grant for even more food and fun stuff at the library. Wal-Mart gave them \$1500 to spend on the needs of us teens at the library. At the beginning of the school year she

got to go shopping and could only spend half of it. She plans to restock after the first of the year after we've eaten up the supply we have now.

So, as you can see, Holly and her staff have our best interests at heart. They don't have to do this. They choose to. They could make us feel like a burden, which we kind of are! Ninety kids in a 5,000 square foot library is difficult to ignore, but they welcome us and make a positive impact on our lives.

#### **4. How has the library, and the nominee, improved the quality of your life?**

If the staff of the Buckeye Library had not welcomed me in the doors after school for the past five years I really don't know what I would do. I have no words to even speculate. This was the only option for my mom and I. I guess she could have tried to find a way to get me home, but we didn't know a lot of people and no one lives near us. It would have been a burden.

I love coming here after school. Everyone here, including the other kids, are friendly. You will see a high school student helping a middle school student with homework. We are really a family. Five years is a huge chunk of your life when you're only seventeen. I have such fond memories of this library. I would not have a lot of these friends or have experienced all the fun and companionship that I have if I had ridden the bus home everyday. The busing cuts are considered a huge hit to the school system, and I know most families wish it would return, but for me it was a blessing in disguise. I got to meet great people, improve my grades, feel more confident and learn how to interact with all kinds and ages of people, not just my peers. Since the behavior issues were squelched by the police officer I have to say there is a lot of respect between the kids and staff of the library. We need them to offer us a place to stay and they have a captive audience to offer assistance to. It's a perfect match. I already mentioned my improved study habits, newfound interest in reading for fun and the research help I have received. I have learned a lot from being at the library after school every day. I am going to miss this place when I graduate and go off to college. I hope I can find a community of people and friends that can even come close to matching what I have at the Buckeye Library.

#### **5. How does the nominee make the library a better place?**

In the past three years Holly and the library staff have redesigned a large portion of the library to make the "Teen Area" much larger. They have opened up the shelving so we can hang out in the teen area but also overflow into the desk and study areas and a family room type area in front of the fireplace. We are even allowed to go into the conference room and work on projects. When there are no programs we can also use the community room. Holly schedules special programs to be held at the library specifically for us. An author named Jordan Sonnenblick came and spoke to us and offered advice on being a better writer. We have had music groups perform and speakers come in to discuss a myriad of topics. Holly and Rochelle, another librarian here, started the "Volunteens" program so students can earn volunteer hours toward graduation without leaving the building. They have all sorts of jobs for us to do from cleaning children's books to stuffing envelopes or cutting out crafts for little kids.

My best memory of my time at the Buckeye Library was when we had a video game tournament last spring. I know some people would say video games don't belong in a library, it's a place to learn. But, when you are here for 2-4 hours you have to have some fun too!

We chose teams and played in the tournament all week. At the end of the week my team won. What's better than getting to play video games with your friends? If you were playing at home it might be two to three guys, but at the library there were so many of us it was really fun. Even the girls were getting in to it!

I had a blast and was so glad my team won. It was serious bragging rights for weeks afterwards! I know some library users have complained about all the students in the building in the afternoon. But the staff has never made me feel unwelcome. In fact, they do everything they can to make sure we are safe, happy and well fed! The residents and voters in the Buckeye Local Schools didn't pass a school levy for more funding from 1997 to 2012. That's fifteen years. Things were getting really scary for a while, losing bussing was beginning to look like the least of our concerns. I truly feel that this entire generation of students have known nothing but complaining and negativity in the community surrounding our schools. Despite it all, our schools are still very good. But the "other place" we can go to feel well taken care of and supported is the library. Many kids don't get a lot of support at home either, so having this sense of community at the library with adults who care, are helpful and welcome you with a smile is a wonderful way to spend my afternoons. I feel the library stepped up when our community was letting us down. I am so grateful for my five years of after school fun, enrichment and guidance that I got at the Buckeye Library. Holly remembers Buckeye Schools fondly when she was there, which was before the funding problems began and she wants to do everything she can to help us enjoy our middle and high school years. She is doing a great job and that's why I think she should win this award.