

June 24, 2016

Dear Sir or Madam:

As a sixteen-year board member whose final term is about over; an active library user; and a homeschool father, I believe I am in a unique position to comment on things I've seen over my four terms on the Wells County Public Library Board of Trustees.

Three things have stood out to me. First, the WCPL has always embraced and utilized technology and new ways of thinking about things. Second, the staff of the WCPL is and has been dedicated to Library Director Stephanie Davis and, importantly, her vision for the library. Third, the WCPL has had an intense customer-service orientation. These all coalesced into one, grand—dare I say it—paradigm-shifting change at the WCPL, the switch from the Dewey classification system to one of the Library's own design.

Director Davis has always brought what seemed to the Board to be forward-thinking technology ideas, and while a replacement for the Dewey Decimal System might hardly be called a technology, per se, when presented, it seemed to us as forward thinking as the various electronic technologies with which we'd been presented.

Once the Board gave its approval to proceed with the project, the WCPL staff displayed its characteristic enthusiastic embrace of Director Davis's vision, because, in part, the staff recognized its potential positive impact on customer service: the change was being made to better serve the library's customers, once called patrons. Now, with the reclassification project complete, library customers are able to search for books, as they do in book stores and on Amazon, by subject matter.

I wish to commend the WCPL for undertaking such a monumental task as reclassifying every single book in the stacks so that its customers are better served. While other libraries may dig in their heels on this subject, the WCPL dispensed with doing something because it had always done things that way, in an effort to better serve its customers.

Finally, I wish to give my full support for giving the Wells County Public Library the Indiana Library Federation's Outstanding Library Award.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graig P. Stettner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Graig P. Stettner

News-Banner PUBLICATIONS

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June 23, 2016

Indiana Library Federation Outstanding Library Award - - -

The Wells County Public Library is one of my favorite destinations in Wells County. I grew up in a small community and did not have access to a library, except the school library when I was a student. I have loved reading since a young adult, and found great joy in stocking my shelves with my finds. What a joy when I re-discovered the beauty of reading, without the expense of buying, at the WCPL.

I don't consider myself the "normal" library patron. I actually have never roamed the stacks. As a very busy person who enjoys reading, I love the ease of reserving books online and stopping in during the day and finding my selections waiting in the hands of the awesome library staff at the checkout desk. Always greeted with a smile.

FREEGAL - I love the ease of downloading music that I enjoy. Such an awesome way to build your own library of favorite tunes!

BAGS OF BOOKS - I want to share the love of reading with my grandson and love the ease of picking up a themed bag of books that we can enjoy on the weekend.

AUDIO BOOKS - Amazing selection!

FUN WEBSITES - Love the "Fun Websites" links online. What a fun way to spend a bit of educational time with the little one.

The WCPL plays an incredibly active role in our community. Staff is engaged and proactive. Most serve on boards and committees throughout the county and are true servant leaders. The programming for the upcoming Indiana Bi-Centennial is pretty amazing. Leaders - not followers!

You don't have to look far to find WCPL through the community. They had a tent set up at a local parks department event to sign people up for the Summer Reading Program.

The addition of the "Story Walks" to the county is neat! An opportunity to read a little story while strolling through the park. The partnership with the Boys Scouts and the Parks Department is just another sign that the WCPL is a real community asset.

WCPL continues to develop their staff as active participants in the "Wells County Leadership Academy". Not only as students, but also facilitators of this local leadership development program.

The programming at the WCPL is beyond amazing. Thoughtful and creative. Something for all ages! A real "go-to" spot!

Jean Bordner
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June 22nd, 2016

Indiana Library Federation
317-257-2040

To Whom It May Concern:

The summer of my tenth year I covered my Father's Secretary's lunches on Tuesdays and Thursdays. When she returned, I would walk the six blocks to the Bozeman Public Library, climb the three sets of stairs and read until it was time to go home around 5:30pm. This was the beginning of my love of public libraries. In the 26 years since, I have been an active patron of nine different library systems in five different states. I tell you this so that you have an understanding of my experience. So when I say that the Wells County Public Library system is exceptional, you know that I do not praise lightly. I have seen good, sloppy, excellent, compassionate and grumpy in a variety of libraries. I know a good library when I see one.

My family moved to the Bluffton area last fall and immediately applied for our library cards. Four weeks later we paid our first fine. Which was perfect, because that meant that my children had checked out so many books, that they lost them under their beds, in the folds of our couch and anywhere a book could be taken. Which is a good many places! My children have participated in book clubs, movie days, engineering activities, trivia challenges and story times. As a family, we have been awed by magicians and inspired by passionate bibliophiles. While the programming is stellar, what really makes this library system wonderful is the genuinely kind and attentive staff. They are never too busy to track the weather, because you thought walking to the library right before dinner with four children was a grand idea, only to witness a deluge once you entered the building. The staff is always willing to step away from their tasks to help an avid non-fiction reader find the perfect book on military weapons of the Revolutionary War. They get excited when you check out a book they love or ask them for a recommendation of a good movie. Overall, every single interaction I have had with the men and women who work at this library has been positive. This is not a sentiment I share lightly; I really do mean that every interaction has been good.

I would be remiss if I didn't also tell you that I not only visit to check out books and read the magazines that I can't possibly afford to subscribe too, but I work at this library. No, I am not on the payroll, but due to unforeseen circumstances upon moving to Bluffton, I discovered that I needed a higher quality of Internet than what I could get at my home for my work. So three days a week, I drag my enormous MAC desktop to the upper floor of the library and work for a few hours. The staff is always attentive to the noise levels around me as well as occasionally looking after my computer if I needed to step away for a few minutes. These small courtesies have allowed me to focus and maintain my high work standards. As you can see, there are so many things to be grateful for.

No matter what the decision is, I hope that you understand that I appreciate this library and its staff. This library's commitment to its patrons is apparent in the people who visit it. For my sentiments are shared by many concerning the staff of the Wells County Public Library. They make everyone's week better.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Brown
Lifetime Reader and Fine Payer

LYNN ELLIOTT
1437 Ridgewood Lane
Bluffton, IN 46714
June 20, 2016

To: Stephanie Davis, Director
Wells County Public Library

From: Lynn Elliott

Subject: Indiana Library Federation Outstanding Library Award

Thank you for the opportunity to recognize our local Wells County Public Library and the ongoing free programs that are presented to the public in this wonderful facility.

As a member of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution and Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, I have spent many hours using the WCPL's research tools located in the Indiana Room. The assistance given by all of the staff has been outstanding. Their suggestions on how to use shelved resource materials, the computer research sites, and how to scan and preserve the results has assisted several in helping to gain membership in patriotic organizations.

The WCPL formed a Genealogy Society Club several years ago under the direction of Vi and Meredith. Members of the club are shown ways of conducting their own personal research with support from the staff of the Indiana Room. Many, but not all, of the members have their own home computers but need assistance with where to go to obtain research information. Lists of research web sites are printed by the WCPL for all kinds of research assistance and computers are available to the few members who do not have computers or access to the internet.

The WCPL's Computer Club answers questions and presents timely programs geared to the "over 50 (barely computer literate) generation" members. This 60 minute program teaches lots of "how to do" and "how to get" information. The following 60 minute program is geared to iPad users. Each month the WCPL staff member, Emily, shows us how to install and use new programs. Two years ago the lesson was on how to install Overdrive on our iPads. I am an avid reader and cannot imagine going a day without this program. Sometimes there are problems in downloading a new e-book and Emily is always available for hands-on "problem fixing."

The WCPL has partnered with the Wells County Historical Society and the Wells County Genealogy Society to celebrate Indiana's Bicentennial. The WCPL has researched their historic downtown buildings and produced an outstanding brochure to promote a downtown self-guided walking tour. Work is now being completed to feature a one-day downtown guided walk with access to many of these buildings. This walk will highlight history, businesses/occupants, restoration, architectural features, along with the court yards of many of the buildings. The leadership of Teresa, Catherine and Emily of the WCPL has been outstanding in promoting and encouraging this project.



TED ELLIS
MAYOR
CITY OF BLUFFTON

It is my understanding that the Wells County Public Library is being considered for the Indiana Library Federation's Outstanding Library Award.

The Library exemplifies creativity in our community and is continuously exploring new ways of interacting with Wells County residents.

Most recently we partnered with the Library on the installation of the new Story Walk at Pickett's Run park. It provides a unique opportunity for families to encourage reading while enjoying the outdoors.

Hardly a month goes by that doesn't find our Parks Department and the Library working in concert in offering activities: our Touch-A-Truck in the spring, our Block Parties and Theater Thursdays. Theater Thursday is a time when we host a movie each month at the library. They provide the space, the movie and all the components to show the movie. We pop the popcorn and Bluffton Regional Medical Center provides door prizes and guest speakers on health-related topics. Library staff also teaches classes for us at our Senior Exploration series.

Our collaboration is not limited to staff and buildings: We share many props and games with each other for special events which helps us save money. A prime example of that is decorations for April's Daddy/Daughter and Mother/Son Dances.

Sometimes, the Library's outreach is done in creative ways. A recent example has been its use of street banners to promote library services to county residents. When the city was looking for a way to brighten up our downtown, the library stepped forward to provide colorful banners for our decorative street lighting poles. These banners were not only aesthetically pleasing, but conveyed a message about the many reasons for visiting the library.

I am a user of the Library, both personally and professionally and am always impressed with its resource offerings. On my very frequent trips to the Library, I often note that community groups and programs are being conducted in the facility. Its location and attractive building conveys a deeply held commitment to downtown's viability.

While my thoughts have focused on the main library in Bluffton, the branch in Ossian also conveys the same welcoming spirit that permeates our entire community.

We are very fortunate to have the Wells County Public Library as an integral part of our community and I highly recommend it for the Outstanding Library Award.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ted Ellis".

Ted Ellis
Mayor



June 21, 2016

RE: Outstanding Library Award

Stephanie Davis, Executive Director, with the Wells County Public Library asked if I would write a letter of support regarding our library and staff. I am honored to give a glowing recommendation for the hard work and dedication these individuals do at our local library and in the community!

A Chamber of Commerce is strong based on the partnerships that exist in a community. I can honestly say that our partnership is strong; however, the staff have created a fun, exciting, inviting, and educational culture to our local library. This culture has allowed people to value this wonderful asset in our community and consider it a destination. We are very proud of our local library and staff. The library is a beautiful and safe environment for anyone.

There are so many staff members involved in community functions and we know if help is needed, ideas need to be generated, or someone needs to step up to lead a project, we can count on the staff at the library to get it done. I have had the pleasure to work with Library staff on committees such as the Bicentennial Downtown Celebration, Leadership Alumni, and many special events over the years. I have had nothing but positive experiences and a level of dedication to deliver a top notch program or event.

I have also had the pleasure to get to know many library staff each year when they participate in our Leadership Academy program. The program has allowed several of these individuals to step out of their comfort zone and be involved in additional community functions. They understand the importance of involvement and networking in our small town.

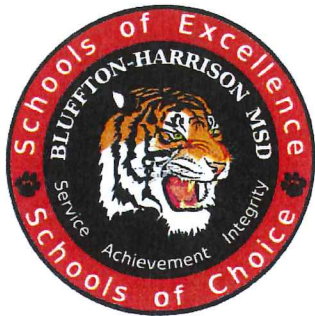
The Chamber of Commerce truly appreciates the additional partnerships they have formed all over Wells County. Again, our Library is a huge asset to our community but it takes the people running the day-to-day operations to create the positive experiences for patrons. I believe our Library staff do that on a daily basis. They love their jobs and take pride in what they do. You can see and feel that energy when you walk through the door.

We greatly appreciate all these individuals and the hard work they provide each and every day. Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at 260.824.0510 ext 2 or eprible@wellscoc.com.

Sincerely,

Erin Prible

Erin Prible
Executive Director
Wells County Chamber of Commerce



Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School

www.bhmsd.org

1100 East Spring Street, Bluffton, Indiana 46714

Phone: 260-824-0333 Fax: 260-824-0512

Mrs. Julie Meitzler, Principal
Mrs. Schlaura Linderwell, Assistant Principal
Mrs. Ginny Vogel, School Counselor
Mrs. Ashley Kilgore, School Counselor

To Whom it May Concern:

As a community member and educator in Bluffton, Indiana for thirty years, it is without hesitation that I write this letter to recommend the Wells County Public Library be recognized as an Indiana Library Federation Outstanding Library. The Wells County Public Library exemplifies all of the attributes of this award including:

- Partnerships with community organizations - The WCPL has worked closely with the schools of Wells County providing services to teachers and families. These services include programming, but also working with the school on needed technology databases and books. Currently, the WCPL is partnering with community organizations to plan a reading celebration for our county this fall.
- Notable service and programs - The WCPL offers a wide array of programs for its patrons. Educationally, we appreciate the "1,000 Books before Kindergarten," "Imagination Library," as well as the many children's programs offered at WCPL. Additionally, our teachers can obtain a library card to get book collections for their classrooms. We are continually using our WCPL to help us meet and/or exceed the Indiana Academic Standards.
- Staff Development - As an educator, I have worked with WCPL as a presenter for staff development discussing how to manage student situations in the library. As a former Board Member, I witnessed the continual professional development for staff at WCPL. Mrs. Davis and her staff are lifelong learners who seek out opportunities to grow and serve the Bluffton community.
- Physical facilities - WCPL is an integral part of our community. It is very common for events to take place at the library. These range from bridal showers, graduation open houses, and community meetings to a United Way of Wells County meeting featuring Glenda Ritz, Superintendent of Public Education. Additionally, the county has supported the growth of the library. I served on the Board when the existing library was constructed. Our community embraced this new facility and now is very proud of WCPL and its development.
- Trustees involvement - As a previous Board Member, I can easily attest to the service of the WCPL Board. The Board is committed to continuous improvement and is supportive of the WCPL staff. Opportunities are given to the Board and staff for long-term and short-term planning.
- Expansion of service - The WCPL has expanded services over the years as needs have changed in our 21st Century World. WCPL has grown and changed to meet the continually changing needs of its patrons.

As you can see, I am very proud of our Wells County Public Library and the role that it plays in our community. Please consider WCPL for this award as it is the "go-to spot" in our community.

Sincerely,

Julie Meitzler, Principal
Bluffton-Harrison Elementary School

The faculty, staff, students, and community of Bluffton-Harrison Elementary
are committed to encouraging learning as a life-long endeavor.

Kathryn Gerber
Wells County Library Patron
Berne Public Library Director
1320 Bellbrook Blvd.
Bluffton, IN 46714

ILF Award, Honors, and Scholarship Committee:

I would like to recommend that the Wells County Public Library be the Outstanding Public Library for 2016. I am well acquainted with this library both personally and professionally. Personally, we are taxpayers and patrons who are grateful to have and support this exceptional library. Professionally, my library career began at the Bluffton-Wells County Public Library (BWCPL) when I became the cataloger.

During the 1970s circulation went from cards, pockets, and stamps to a new system called the Gaylord machine. In that same year, as storage of periodicals became increasingly hard to find in the Carnegie Building, microfiche was introduced. The bookmobile reached to all areas of the county and classroom collections encouraged reading in all elementary schools in the county. Outreach also extended to nursing homes, nursery schools, and collaboration between BWCPL and the Southern Wells High School gave us a branch in the southern part of Wells County to support bookmobile service. In the early 1980s, a branch library was established in Ossian, IN, in the northern part of Wells County. I believe this history shows that the Wells County Public Library has roots of vision, innovation, and excellence.

Looking at the Wells County Public Library in 2016, there is the same vision, innovation, and excellence.

After much research and discussion, the library boldly moved from the Dewey classification system to a Word-Wise classification system with staff support and cooperation; in fact, staff suggested the move to administration from patron input. The project was a prime example of staff, administration, and board working together to bring an innovative approach to patrons to enhance finding library materials.

The Northern Indiana Digital Library (NIDL) consortium which provides e-materials to eight libraries is chaired by Stephanie Davis, the Wells County Public Library (WCPL) director. This consortium has allowed small libraries like Berne to share a wealth of resources with their patrons that would not be possible within our local budget. The consortium is a prime example of WCPL's willingness to combine resources with other area libraries to benefit their own patrons as well as neighboring patrons.

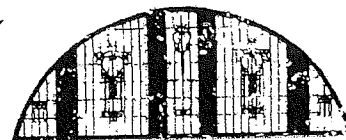
The library recently rebranded its logo and updated its webpage, making the library more recognizable and information more easily accessible. Technology is embraced and shared with staff and library users. The library staff is visible in the community, serving on boards and promoting library services. The board supports staff involvement in the state library community where they share their expertise as trainers and presenters, a benefit to all of us in the library community. WCPL complies and surpasses Indiana library standards; hires and retains top quality staff by encouraging and reimbursing educational opportunities; and if I need a policy, WCPL is my first webpage check or director phone call.

In conclusion, the Wells County Public Library is a premier medium-sized public library and would be well-deserving of the honor of Outstanding Public Library 2016.

ECKHART PUBLIC LIBRARY

603 SOUTH JACKSON STREET, AUBURN, INDIANA 46706 PHONE 260 925-2414

www.epl.lib.in.us



June 28, 2016

Indiana Library Federation
941 E. 86th Street, Suite 260
Indianapolis, Indiana 46240

I am writing in support of Wells County Public Library's nomination for the Indiana Library Federation's Outstanding Library Award for 2016.

In 1992, when I became a new director, it was immediately recommended to me that I spend time at the Wells County Public Library (WCPL) for guidance. Within a short time I made my way to visit WCPL Director Barbara Elliott and her staff, who welcomed and advised me about building projects, automated accounting systems, and the importance of community engagement and professional collaborations. Since that time, WCPL Staff and Director Stephanie Davis have been one of Eckhart Public Library's key resources for inspiration and leadership in developing progressive library services. WCPL sets high standards for providing excellent library services to its community and enthusiastically collaborates and assists other public libraries in their efforts to do the same.

On a visit to this library, the WCPL staff is enthusiastic about sharing practical advice about the array of services offered to patrons. They don't hesitate to take the lead when they identify a need to enhance library services to patrons and colleagues. Prior to the development of public library certification standards in Indiana, WCPL created and hosted a Mock Caldecott workshop that is both popular and beneficial to our youth services staff. As eBooks gained the interest of patrons, Stephanie and her staff took the lead in helping establish the Northern Indiana Digital Library Consortium (NIDL). She and her staff manage this eight-member consortium, helping to ensure access to a wide variety of high-quality digital content for patrons.

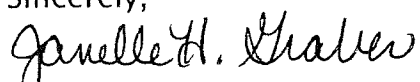
WCPL was one of the first Indiana libraries that I visited to offer a full service coffee shop operated by an independent vendor. When a new vendor was needed, Stephanie and her staff participated in a community wide "Tiger Tank" initiative to select and financially support a local start up to take over the operation of the coffee shop. This is just one of many examples that speaks to the ongoing dedication to deep community engagement that Stephanie and her staff strive to achieve in Wells County.

With community input, WCPL spent two years preparing and implementing the migration to a non-Dewey based collection management system nicknamed Word Wise. Throughout this process, WCPL staff readily shared their experiences with interested colleagues by providing tours and insights for other

libraries interested in making this change. They presented at conferences throughout the state and are continuing to advise multiple libraries currently in the process of making this transition.

Wells County Public Library Director Stephanie Davis and her staff consistently exceed expectations of their patrons and serve as an exemplary model for other libraries. They are doing outstanding work and deserve this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janelle H. Graber". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and address.

Janelle H. Graber, Director
Eckhart Public Library
603 S. Jackson Street
Auburn, Indiana 46706



Kendallville Public Library

Providing access to information...for life.

June 27, 2016

I am pleased to be writing this letter on behalf of Stephanie Davis and her team at the Wells County Public Library. I have had the privilege to work with many of the staff in a variety of capacities and anticipate the new ideas and experiences they bring to any conversation.

During my time as the KPL Teen Services Manager, before becoming Library Director, I would frequently learn and share ideas with the WCPL teen staff at roundtables and conferences. Then, I was fortunate to join the CYPD Board the year that Susan Dailey was chairperson. Susan and I shared many hours together traveling to board meetings and, since I was still relatively new to the library profession, it was incredibly helpful to have her insight and guidance in both CYPD conference planning but also the profession as a whole. A few years later, as the conference chairperson myself, I was so thankful to have had those conversations with Susan and also thankful to have yet another WCPL staff member serving on the board with me.

Jenny Draper, retired KPL Director, and Stephanie shared many similarities in their management style and passion for libraries, service to patrons, and professional development. I feel right at home collaborating and visiting with any member of the WCPL staff because we share a similar culture.

The Kendallville Library, Wells County Library and 4 other libraries in Northeast Indiana are members of a Continuous Improvement group. A handful of staff members from each system meet 6 times a year to share ideas, collaborate, problem solve, and network. Stephanie and her team are an integral part of our conversation-often leading the discussion and inspiring me to rethink our system for performance evaluations, staff recognition, and training.

The biggest inspiration from the WCPL team is their leap from Dewey to WordWise. Recently, we decided to also transition to a topic-driven collection, ditching Dewey for a more approachable, patron-friendly system. My staff and I talked to members of the WCPL staff on multiple occasions for more than a year-learning the ins and outs, growing pains, and successes of the transition process. Stephanie graciously gave us a tour, presentation, and teamed up department leaders from each library system so we had the best idea possible of what we were getting ourselves into. Every day for the last 2 months we have been actively categorizing and relabeling materials and not a day goes by that we do not refer back to the notes and guidance gleaned from the hours of discussion with the WCPL experience.

I cannot think of a library or staff more deserving of this award, they are truly outstanding!

Sincerely,
Katie Mullins
Library Director

Kendallville Public Library • 221 S. Park Avenue, Kendallville, IN 46755 • 260-343-2010
Limberlost Branch • 164 Kelly St., PO Box 447, Rome City, IN 46784 • 260-854-2775

www.kendallvillelibrary.org

June 17, 2016

Indiana Library Federation
941 East 86th Street, Suite 260
Indianapolis, Indiana 46540

Dear Indiana Library Federation:

I am pleased to write and express my support for the nomination of the **Wells County Public Library** as **ILF's Outstanding Library of the Year**.

For the past 5 years, the Nappanee Public Library (NPL) has been a part of a Continuous Improvement (CI) Group in Northeast Indiana that currently includes the following libraries: Garrett Public Library, Huntington City-Township Public Library, Kendallville Public Library, Peabody Public Library and the Wells County Public Library.

Our six libraries meet quarterly to discuss a multitude of library issues in an open, judgment free environment. Key staff rotate and attend the meetings based on the theme of the discussion. The group shares ideas, brainstorms new ways of doing things and holds each other accountable for the projects they choose to pursue. No issue or project is too small or too large to share and get feedback on.

Participating libraries look forward to these meetings and find them a great way to work with like-minded, other forward thinking library staff. There has been measureable improvement in our overall effectiveness. The group has enabled staff develop a can-do attitude, which helps make projects (large or small) seem more enjoyable and attainable.

As a founding member, the Wells County Public Library (WCPL) enthusiastically embraces this type of collaborative atmosphere and is constantly pursuing ways to make their library the best it can be. WCPL uses these meetings to actively help other libraries with their issues, while openly sharing and applying new ideas to their own library.

Many informal mentorships have formed between NPL and WCPL staff. Anytime NPL staff are stumped, or are interested in doing something differently, WCPL is the first place they contact. WCPL staff is always willing to share both their best practices and "learning experiences".

Our CI group has had the privilege of watching WCPL take on one of public libraries most controversial and mammoth projects...going Dewy-less. From the initial idea to the project's completion, we saw the way the staff worked together. They created their own Word Wise categorization system, implemented workflows, and physically reorganized their non-fiction section with little or no inconvenience to their customers.

It is evident that the WCPL staff effectively work together by communicating openly, supporting and motivating each other to do their best. They acknowledge each other's strengths and respect each other's opinions, for the good of the library and the community. This type of teamwork is what every library strives for, but so few attain.

During my 20 year library career in Indiana, I have seen some very good libraries. WCPL ranks at the top of those that are engaging their communities with innovative programs and services. In addition, their willingness to collaborate with others in the library community in order to make the customer's experience the best that it can be, professionally benefits all that come in contact with them.

The WCPL is above and beyond what is traditionally thought of as a public library. It is because of their dedication to go the extra mile in everything they do, that I feel that WCPL should be commended with receiving **ILF's Outstanding Library of the Year Award.**

If you have any questions, or require more information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Lissa Krull, Director
Nappanee Public Library